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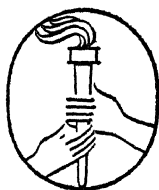
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PRIMITIVISM IN MODERN PAINTING

PRIMITIVISM IN MODERN PAINTING

By ROBERT J. GOLDWATER

Instructor in Fine Arts, New York University



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PRIMITIVISM IN MODERN PAINTING

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FIRST EDITION

K-N

TO MY FATHER

PREFATORY NOTE

I WISH to thank Dr. Richard Offner for his initial suggestion of the subject of this study, and for subsequent helpful discussions. Dr. A. Philip McMahon and Dr. Meyer Schapiro have followed the work from its beginning, and their criticisms of both general treatment and text have been invaluable. Discussions of comparative material with Dr. Walter Friedlaender, Dr. Karl Lehmann-Hartleben, and Dr. Erwin Panofsky also have been of great aid; and Dr. Walter W. S. Cook has been most helpful in guiding the preparation of the manuscript.

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	xvii
The origin and nature of the problem	
Its various divisions and their treatment	
CHAPTER I: PRIMITIVE ART IN EUROPE	1
<i>PART I: THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE MATERIAL</i>	1
The foundation of museums of ethnology	
Their change from "documentary" to "aesthetic" installation	
A chronology of museums and exhibitions	
<i>PART II: THE EVALUATION OF THE ART OF PRIMITIVE PEOPLES</i>	13
An historical account and analysis of the attitude of anthropological and ethnological writers toward primitive art: The beginnings of their interest and the growth of the realization of artistic value	
CHAPTER II: THE PREPARATION	47
The use of exotic stimuli other than the primitive	
Latent primitivism in historicism and exoticism	
Primitivizing elements in <i>art nouveau</i>	

CHAPTER III: ROMANTIC PRIMITIVISM	57
GAUGUIN AND THE SCHOOL OF PONT-AVEN	57
Direct contact with primitive peoples, and reaction against civilization	
Copying of Marquesan art motives	
Confusion of the naïve and the primitive	
Identification of primitive and European beginnings	
Simplification of formal means	
Symbolic theories	
THE FAUVES	74
The "discovery" of African sculpture	
Its actual influence	
Admiration for popular and children's art	
Interest in physical harmony with nature	
Simplification and violence of formal methods	
CHAPTER IV: EMOTIONAL PRIMITIVISM	87
THE BRÜCKE	87
The "discovery" of Oceanic and African art	
Its influence and that of medieval art	
"Natural" and exotic subject-matter; union of man and nature	
Emphasis on violent and basic emotions	
Simplifications of technique	
Emotional and formal immediacy	
THE BLAUE REITER	102
Influence of medieval, oriental, primitive, and folk art	
Exotic, wild, and provincial subject-matter	

Formal schematizations and symbolism
Symbolic animism

CHAPTER V: INTELLECTUAL PRIMITIVISM	117
<i>THE DIRECT INFLUENCE OF PRIMITIVE SCULPTURE</i>	117
Influence on the painting of Picasso	
Formal and emotional reasons for this influence	
Differences from the primitive in form and content	
Influence on Modigliani	
<i>PRIMITIVIST TENDENCIES IN ABSTRACT PAINTING</i>	130
The search for "basic" forms	
The expansion of these forms and the search for "basic" subject-matter	
Reduction of painting to a lowest common denominator	
Similar primitivist elements in cubism, purism, constructivism	
CHAPTER VI: PRIMITIVISM OF THE SUBCONSCIOUS	143
<i>THE MODERN PRIMITIVES</i>	143
Contrast of their technique and their vision	
Contrast of their achievement and their appreciation	
Their relation to primitive art	
Similar reasons for their vogue	
<i>THE CHILD CULT</i>	153
Its best exemplification the art of Klee	
Derivation of form and generalized content	
Equation of private and universal meanings	
Obliqueness of formal effect	

<i>DADA AND SURREALISM</i>	161
Partial origins in automatic, child, and psychopathic art	
The search for compelling, pervasive subject-matter	
Confusion of romantic and primitivist elements	
 CHAPTER VII: A DEFINITION OF PRIMITIVISM	171
The method and intent of a discursive definition	
The <i>unifying assumption</i> of primitivism	
The development of emotional primitivism	
The triple expansion of intellectual primitivism	
The endemizing direction of primitivism	
Its relation to archaism and romanticism	
Indication of its causes	
 <i>BIBLIOGRAPHIES</i>	193

ILLUSTRATIONS

(The illustrations, grouped in a separate section, will be found following page 86)

FIGURE

- 1 (a) PARIS: Trocadéro, Library: Old Installation
(b) PARIS: Trocadéro: Old Installation
- 2 PARIS: Trocadéro: Installation after Reorganization of 1933–34
- 3 MUNCH: *Dance of Life*. 1894. Oslo: Nationalgalleri
- 4 MUNCH: *Jealousy*. 1895. Oslo: Nationalgalleri
- 5 GAUGUIN: *Woodcut*. New York: Metropolitan Museum
- 6 MARQUESAS ISLANDS: *Decorated Staffs*. Paris: Trocadéro
- 7 GAUGUIN: *The Spirit of the Dead Watching*. 1892. New York: A. Conger Goodyear Collection
- 8 GAUGUIN: *The Day of the God*. 1894. The Art Institute of Chicago
- 9 GAUGUIN: *The Yellow Christ*. 1889. Paul Rosenberg Collection (formerly)
- 10 GAUGUIN: *la Orana Maria*. 1891. New York: Lewisohn Collection
- 11 VLAMINCK: *Bathers*. 1908
- 12 DERAÏN: *Bathers*. 1908
- 13 DERAÏN: *Composition*. 1908
- 14 MATISSE: *Le Luxe*. 1908. Copenhagen: Museum
- 15 MATISSE: *Women by the Sea*. 1908
- 16 MATISSE: *The Dance*. 1909–10
- 17 NOLDE: *Masks*. 1911. Essen: Folkwang Museum (formerly)

- 18 NOLDE: Indian Dancers. 1915. Detroit: Dr. W. R. Valentiner Collection
- 19 NOLDE: Death of Mary of Egypt
- 20 HECKEL: Bathers (woodcut). 1911
- 21 MUELLER: Girls Bathing. 1921. Detroit: Dr. W. R. Valentiner Collection
- 22 KIRCHNER: Bathers
- 23 HECKEL: Self-Portrait (lithograph). 1914.
- 24 HECKEL: Portrait Study. 1918. Detroit: Dr. W. R. Valentiner Collection
- 25 NOLDE: Brother and Sister
- 26 CAMPENDONK: Saturday (watercolor). 1918. New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation
- 27 MARC: Tower of Blue Horses. 1913. Berlin: National Gallery
- 28 MARC: The Apes. 1911. Berlin: Bernard Koehler Collection
- 29 MARC: Gold Horses. 1912.
- 30 KANDINSKY: The Lake. 1910. Moscow: State Tretyakov Galleries
- 31 CHAGALL: Russian Mood. 1911. New York: J. B. Neumann Collection
- 32 PICASSO: Head. 1907
- 33 PICASSO: Self-Portrait. 1907
- 34 PICASSO: Nude. 1907
- 35 IVORY COAST FIGURE, SENUFO: Figure. Paris: Paul Guillaume Collection (formerly)
- 36 PICASSO: Dancer. 1907–08
- 37 BAKOTA: Ancestral Figure. New York: De Hauke Collection
- 38 PICASSO: Study for the Young Ladies of Avignon. 1907. Paris: Guillaume Collection (formerly)
- 39 PICASSO: The Young Ladies of Avignon. 1906–07. New York: Museum of Modern Art

- 40 PICASSO: Study for the Young Ladies of Avignon. 1907
- 41 PICASSO: Two Nudes. 1908. Moscow: Museum of Modern Western Art
- 42 PICASSO: Woman with a White Towel. 1908
- 43 PICASSO: The Farm Woman. 1908. Moscow: Museum of Modern Western Art
- 44 LÉGER: The Clown. 1918.
- 45 LÉGER: Negro Ballet (sketch). 1923.
- 46 HERBIN: Abstraction. 1932.
- 47 MONDRIAN: Composition. 1937.
- 48 ROUSSEAU: The Marriage. 1904. Paris: Mme. Paul Guillaume Collection
- 49 ROUSSEAU: Woman in Brown in the Forest
- 50 ROUSSEAU: The Dream. 1910. New York: Sidney Janis Collection
- 51 ROUSSEAU: Lake Lemán. Boston: John T. Spaulding Collection
- 52 ANONYMOUS XIX CENTURY PAINTER: The Barracks. Paris: Wolters Collection
- 53 BOMBOIS: The Allée. Paris: Mme. Paul Gregory Collection
- 54 KLEE: Acrobatic Act. 1923. New York: J. B. Neumann Collection
- 55 KLEE: Sheet of Images. 1937.
- 56 KLEE: Introducing the Miracle. 1916.
- 57 FEININGER: Ships.
- 58 MIRO: Personage (gouache). 1935

INTRODUCTION

THE most contemptuous criticism of recent painting comes from those who say: "Any child of eight could have done that." It is also the most difficult of all judgments to answer, since it involves the recognition, but not the admiration, of an apparent spontaneity of inspiration and simplicity of technique whose excellence we have come to take for granted. But our standard is a recent one, and when its value is questioned we see that it cannot be explained from within the individual canvas.

Whether we understand it or not, and whether we approve it or not, this affinity of large sections of modern painting to children's art is one of the most striking of its characteristics. It is part of a much wider and vaguer affinity which has been generally recognized, yet never pinned down: It has been felt that modern art is in some way primitive. With rare exceptions in which specific adaptations from Africa and Oceania have been pointed out, the allusions have been as vague as the problem. Has modern art, for lack of a tradition and as a last resort, merely appropriated the technical practices and formal conceptions of aboriginal craftsmen? If so, have the borrowings been indiscriminate or has there been a selection? Has modern art a fundamental emotional and spiritual relationship with the art of the primitives? If so, just what is meant by the primitive; is it Altamira or the Congo; is it a Benin bronze or a New Guinea pointed head? Or is it modern painting itself?

"Children's drawings, folk paintings, negro art: all bring joy in 'primitiveness,' for which the overripe culture of the decadence longed. They allowed

the hurried inhabitants of large cities to glimpse the recovery of an hour, and so to counterfeit a psychological 'gathering together' that in truth is nothing but overstrain. Aids for the weak: Cézanne did not use them."¹

"No one as much as Cézanne forced French painting towards the primitive, and we can see a dualism in him. . . ." ²

"And just as all new artistic endeavor manifests itself at first with the aid of forms and elements of style taken from strange provinces, modern art also based itself on three spheres in which kindred aims seemed to be realised: on the art of primitive peoples, on prehistoric art, and on the 'artistic productions' of the child."³

"Are we seeing a vogue for something that is desired and sought after, but that realises itself only as screaming, invention, violence, self-intoxication, and self-glorification; as flat immediacy and weak-sighted will toward the primitive; indeed as hatred of culture; for something that is truly and deeply to be seen in certain schizophrenics."⁴

These are the problems we will discuss.

Yet clearly, since modern painting is modern, it is not primitive in the same sense as any of the aboriginal or prehistoric arts. If there is any common conception which ties together these very diversified styles, it will not include twentieth century Europe. Nor are the productions of adults the same as those of children, however imitative their intention may be. In relation to these arts as an ideal, the modern painter must necessarily be *primitivistic*. This is so no matter what his conception of the primitive. Just as in relation to the "classic," whether we conceive it to be the style of the fourth or the fifth century B.C., or like Winckelmann inadvertently confuse it with Rome, any derivative style must be "classicistic." Whether, in any absolute sense, such arts are "truly primitive" we do not propose to decide. Like decisions about the essential and eternal classicism of the painters of the Renaissance, such discussions are probably fruitless.⁵ Rather we will try to describe the character of modern primitivism, its variations, its intentions, and some of its causes.

In the light of these considerations the reader will not expect

many purely formal comparisons of modern works of art with the aboriginal styles by which they have been inspired. But he may be surprised by the extreme scarcity of the direct influence of primitive art forms. With the exception of a few of Gauguin's woodcuts, of some paintings of the *Blaue Reiter* group in Germany, and of the very limited production of Picasso's negroid period, there is little that is not allusion and suggestion rather than immediate borrowing. And even in these instances, as throughout modern sculpture, where the opportunities for borrowing are much more numerous, a careful comparison discloses changes and interpretations that are striking.

It is primitivism in which we are interested; but this presupposes the knowledge of some kind of primitive. For this reason we have preceded our examination of modern painting with an outline of the development of museums of ethnology. By tracing the history of their origins, and the attitude toward their collections reflected in the manner of their installation, we can follow the degree of availability of primitive art objects in Europe. Long before the "discovery" of aboriginal art in 1904, examples from Africa and Oceania could be seen in many museums. A survey of the growth of these museums will show to what extent they were intended to perform an aesthetic function. Further, by an analysis of the opinions of ethnologists towards their artistic subject-matter, and of the evaluations latent in their discussions, we can determine the relationship of the slowly expanding scientific interest to the sudden fascination of the purely artistic. We shall see that though in isolated instances the scientists appreciated their objects as "art" long before the artists, the general ethnological revaluation was due to the influence of the painters and sculptors. Nevertheless the gradual awareness due to the long presence of primitive art in Europe was a necessary condition of its aesthetic discovery.

Within the history of painting, the primitivism that is associated with a knowledge of aboriginal art also has a considerable back-

ground. Throughout the nineteenth century there were recurring tendencies toward the oriental and the generally exotic, toward the Christian and classical naïve, and toward the provincial. These movements and the primitivizing efforts of *art nouveau* that were contemporary with the work of Gauguin, have been called a preparation: Though still archaizing rather than primitivizing in the manner of the twentieth century, they employed the knowledge of a variety of styles new to their period in an attempt to recapture a certain kind of simplicity. How their ideal of the primitive, imbued with the old conception of a return to an harmonious golden day—if not of culture at least of a controlled style in the arts—differs from the ferocious primitivizing of the last thirty years we will try to determine in our closing definition.

The terms “romantic,” “emotional,” “intellectual,” and “subconscious” have been used to differentiate four aspects of the primitivist impulse in the twentieth century. Not intended as rigorous demarcations, they have been employed rather as labels for already existing classifications in order to group together similar tendencies and to establish certain parallels between them. Our analysis will show that within each of these groupings there is a movement from the inspiration of particular primitive forms and styles toward a wider, more general, and more indigenous primitive ideal. Each begins with the impulse of some direct, but external influence. Each passes through a stage in which it finds an affinity with some primitive style closer to its own culture. And each ends by having so expanded its primitivism and so modified and purged its own style of any extraneous elements that the two become synonymous. Thus the artists of the *Brücke* first “discovered” aboriginal art and used the broad medium of the wood-cut to simplify their style. While those of the *Blaue Reiter*, who, somewhat later, continued the same approach to the primitive, wished to emulate children’s art and the folk art of Bavaria, and finally produced an abstract, pantheistically oriented

style intended to express the emotions of plants, animals, and the universe. Among the "intellectuals" Picasso was influenced by the rhythmic forms of African sculpture, the purists by a theory embodying the elements of a universal geometry. Moreover, something of the same endemizing process can be observed among the four groups considered as a whole, the latest artists beginning their efforts at a more indigenous level than those whom we have called "romantic." Thus our groupings, originally determined by the general historical development of the various schools, are seen to be justified in terms of the history of primitivism. And it is this parallel process of expansion, repeated in all the four divisions of our study, that ties together the four chapters in which they are examined.

In attempting, finally, to give a definition of primitivism, we do not mean to indicate that we imagine it to be any one specific thing which can be paraphrased in capsule form. Primitivism is not the name for a particular period or school in the history of painting, and consequently no description of a limited set of objective characteristics which will define it can be given. The various attempts which have been made so to define romanticism—unless this word is used in a narrow historical and geographical sense—should be sufficient evidence of this fact.⁶ Since primitivism, as well as romanticism, is an attitude productive of art, its results are bound to vary as the conditions upon which this attitude works also vary, although the variation of the second term need not be proportional to that of the first. But since the conditioning term is in reality a compound, whose different aspects can be picked out and combined in a multitude of ways, it can give rise to many artistic points of view. Therefore it is useless to seek another single attitude which will always accompany the one we are trying to define: Witness the attempts to couple romanticism with individualism, or with *l'art pour l'art*.⁷ Not that the primitivism of the twentieth century is a perpetually recurring phenomenon in the arts, like the classic and romantic poles

of Grierson. The peculiarities of the time are its peculiarities, and the recent atmosphere has been especially favorable to its growth.

Our definition of primitivism must, in consequence, be discursive: It will summarize and make explicit the implications of the detailed analyses of theories and paintings. Primitivism will be distinguished from other attitudes such as archaism and romanticism, from which it partly stems and with which it has partial overlappings. We will point out how its unqualified assumption of the inherent value of the historical, psychological, or formal primitive, and of the pervasiveness and uniformity of the fundamental for which it seeks are new and characteristic features. We will also differentiate it in its points of contact with the true primitive (which again we do not take to be one simple style); and the reasons for the changing attitude of the modern artist toward what he considers as primitive will be indicated. This will lead to a consideration of the basis of the concentric trend of primitivism which we have touched on above, and how it is born of the constantly renewed endeavor of modern painting to create an art which, by having its roots in fundamental and pervasive factors of experience will be both emotionally compelling to the individual and comprehensible to the many. And finally, there will be an indication of how the relation of the modern painter to the history of his own art, to his immediate audience, and to the society in which he tries to assert his existence, all have combined to make for the creation of primitivism.

Notes

¹ Deri, Max, *Die Neue Malerei: sechs Vortraege* (Leipzig: Seemann, 1921), p. 139.

² Einstein, Carl, *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Propylaen-Verlag, 1931), p. 19.

³ Saiko, George, "Why Modern Art Is Primitive," *The London Studio*, VII (1934), 275.

⁴ Jaspers, Karl, *Strindberg und van Gogh* (Berlin: Springer, 1926), p. 151. Many other examples might be given; e.g.: Grautoff, Otto, "Sehnsucht ins Kinderland," *Die*

Neue Kunst (Berlin: Karl Siegismund, 1921), pp. 93-103. Lange, Konrad, *Das Wesen der Kunst* (Berlin: G. Grote, 1907), pp. 419-20. Lehel, Francois, *Notre Art Dément* (Paris: Jonquières, 1926), *passim*.

⁵ Hinks, Roger, " 'Classical' and 'Classicistic' in the Criticism of Ancient Art," *Kritische Berichte*, VI (1937), 94-108.

⁶ Rosenthal, Léon, *La Peinture Romantique* (Paris: Albert Fontemoing, n. d.), Book IV, Chapter I.

⁷ Rosenthal, *ibid.*, p. 149:

"Le trait dominant de la peinture romantique c'est qu'elle a cherché à s'affranchir de toutes les préoccupations étrangères à la peinture même. . . . La doctrine de l'art pour l'art est la sienne . . ."

Colin, Paul, *La Peinture Européenne au XIXe Siècle: Le Romantisme* (Paris: Floury, 1935), p. 9:

"Le romantisme créa donc, ou tout au moins développa la personnalité, l'individualisme."

PRIMITIVISM IN MODERN PAINTING

CHAPTER I: PART I

THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE MATERIAL

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ETHNOLOGICAL MUSEUMS

It is not surprising to begin a study of primitivism by an account of ethnological museums and of ethnologists' opinions. We shall see that the development of the former reflected the ideas of the latter, and that between them they made primitive art available to the European eye before the artists got around to its discovery: The artistic interest of the twentieth century in the productions of primitive peoples was neither as unexpected nor as sudden as is generally supposed. Its preparation goes well back into the nineteenth century, as this history of ethnology and the subsequent outline of the parallel interest within the history of art will show.¹

Our purpose is not to give a detailed story of museums of ethnology throughout Europe. Such a project, fascinating in itself, would be worthy of a lengthy essay, and require a discussion of the development of general ethnological theory in the various home countries and of work in the field in many countries abroad.² It would demand as well an investigation of the private and public political and economic conditions encouraging and discouraging ethnographical activity. But though we can only sketch in the results of such a history as it affects the arts, this will at least by implication place the problem of primitivism in its properly wider setting. It will serve to indicate at the outset what we will return to at the close of our investigation: some of the scientific, and more generally extra-artistic conditions of an aesthetic manifestation.

The most superficial recollection of the history of the discovery and further exploration of the now subject continents will recall that the penetration of Africa and of Oceania was not carried on at an equal pace.³ During the eighteenth century, while the various islands of Melanesia and Polynesia were becoming familiar to European navigators, Africa enjoyed an almost complete neglect. Though a trade in slaves, gold, ivory, and other products was carried on with the West Coast tribes, this was done through marginal trading stations, and there was no attempt at penetration into the interior.⁴ We cannot go into the various reasons, geographical, climatic, religious, and commercial, which produced a relative ignorance of African tribes and a relative knowledge of the Oceanic islands at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The effect upon the museums was that Oceanic objects preceded those from Africa in store-rooms and exhibits. Thus Vienna began with pieces brought back by Captain Cook; the collection in Hamburg, due to South Sea connections of this trading city, was chiefly of Oceanic origin; and in England both the London and Cambridge museums had many Polynesian and Melanesian specimens before Africa was well represented.⁵

These were, however, but slight beginnings. How slight we may judge from a "letter" written in 1843 by Ph.Fr. De Siebold in favor of ethnographical museums: De Siebold urges their importance, and particularly "the importance of their creation in European states possessing colonies," because he sees in them a means of understanding the subject peoples and of awakening the interest of the public and of merchants in them, all necessary conditions for a lucrative trade.⁶ Towards this end the science of ethnology is indispensable. De Siebold gives us too, a glimpse of a more curious and less scientific age, the eighteenth century, which picked out of its rarity cabinets, where it "kept cult objects and other savage utensils," the most hideous examples in order to testify to "the strangeness and inhumanity of their customs."

"Some products of the art and the industry of half-civilized peoples were also preserved, but much less in the interests of science than out of regard for the great perfection of the technical arts which had been found among these barbarians."⁷

Though a few years in advance of his contemporaries, De Siebold was on the right track, and the almost simultaneous founding of ethnographical museums in the decades immediately following was due at least as much to the political and economic competition for world markets as to the Darwinian theory of evolution. This was especially true in Germany, which was further behind, and so more conscious of the supplementary activity necessary to advance its commercial ambitions.

The chronology of the museums shows that the greater number of the beginnings of the important collections is confined to the third quarter of the nineteenth century.⁸ The nuclei of the museums of Berlin, London, Rome, Leipzig, and Dresden go back to this period.⁹ The attitude of the founders of these museums towards the objects under their care had not changed so much from that of De Siebold's curiosity collectors. This attitude is best indicated by the fact that the three museums of Berlin, Paris, and Rome were originally parts of museums of "antiquities" (i.e., prehistoric and unclassifiable objects), and that in each case it took some time to get the ethnological section separated from the remainder of the museum.^{9a} The Berlin museum had previously been part of the *fuersstliche Kunstkammer* for which Japanese arms and armor were already being bought at the time of the Great Elector.¹⁰ In Paris the project of an ethnological museum was first conceived during the preparations for the Universal Exposition of 1854, the year after New Caledonia had been annexed, and while Senegal and Gabun were being penetrated by France; and it was therefore natural that the museum desired, but never achieved, by Jomard, whose idea it first was, should have been one of "*géographie et voyages*."¹¹ In the Exposition

of 1878, which finally gave the impulse for the foundation of an ethnographical museum—the present *Trocadéro*—separate from the combined museum at St. Germain-en-Laye, and largely inspired by the *Nordiska Museet* in Stockholm, by far the largest part of the objects came from America, whence they had been brought from Mexico by Charles Wiener, and from Colombia by Eduard André.^{11a} (Peruvian pottery and ornaments had been introduced during the previous century into the *Cabinet des Médailles* by Dombey.) Africa was represented only by “antiquities from the Canary Islands . . . and two panoplies from Gabun,” and Oceania merely by “popular objects” from the Celebes, and some “ancient and modern pieces” sent from the Hawaiian Islands, all scant enough.¹²

Nine years after the foundation of the *Trocadéro*, Hamy, its instigator, went to London to report on the Colonial Exposition which was being held there. It is significant that none of the reproductions which illustrate his account are of objects of art, nor are any of the collections which he mentions as in the Exposition made up of such objects; and he reports that objects were installed helter-skelter, without any regional classification.¹³ In the Paris Exposition of 1889, too, it was harpoons, arrows, oars, and axes that predominated, though there is an occasional mention in the catalogue of pieces shown for their artistic interest: prow ornaments from New Guinea, an “heraldic statue” from New Zealand, a sculptured box from the Ashanti.¹⁴ This evidence of the purely technical and curiosity interest shown in objects of art, so that they were exhibited simply as indications of the state of mechanical development and skill among exotic peoples, is particularly interesting in the light of a contemporary survey of the ethnological museums of Europe. This survey, written by Kristian Bahnson, in 1888, shows us that the principal museums were by this time well established, and contained in their collections objects from most of the South Sea Islands, and from the Gabun, Loango coast, Congo, Senegambia, Guinea, and Ashanti

regions of Africa.¹⁵ Work now highly prized for its artistic qualities comes from all of these areas, and it was therefore not because of lack of opportunity that such work was not collected, or, if collected, not shown in a manner calculated to make for its appreciation. If few art objects were shown in the museums, therefore, it was rather the fault of the collectors, influenced, as we will show below through the study of their writings, by the misapplication to the arts of general evolutionary theory, which was in its turn influenced by a naturalistic aesthetic.¹⁶

From this time on until after the World War there was little change in the attitude of the museums. Among museum officials, it was only von Luschan, at that time in Africa himself, who recognized the importance of the art of Benin, revealed to the world in quantity through the British Punitive Expedition of 1897. The English museum officials were only tardily stirred into the acquisition of the bronzes and ivories through German activity in the London market.¹⁷ In 1892 the Leipzig museum held a special African exhibition, but it was 1921 before there was an exhibition of negro sculpture.¹⁸ The Congo was represented for the first time in the Antwerp international exposition of 1894, and again in 1897 was an important part—in a special section at Tervueren—of the *Exposition Universelle de Bruxelles*. But this was purely in the interests of commerce; and the knowledge of Congo art may be shown from the surprise of Torday and Joyce, as much as ten years later, at finding the excellent work of the Bushongo.¹⁹ Yet the Museum of the Congo, the basis of which was the Tervueren exhibition, and which today is still purely documentary in its installation, has not been without influence upon recent taste; for the work of the German scholars there during the occupation of Belgium was of considerable aid to Carl Einstein in his subsequent propaganda for the aesthetic recognition of negro sculpture.²⁰

In 1918, Verneau, giving an account of the uses of a museum of ethnography, mentions its usefulness in the arts, how artists who treat exotic subjects find its documents indispensable, and how exotic fashions have been borrowed from the *Trocadéro*; but he subordinates these to the knowledge which exporters may gain of the tastes of the peoples with whom they wish to deal.²¹ In 1919 the first commercial exhibition of primitive art was held in Paris, though long before this the dealers had been active. And by 1923 an *Exposition de l'art indigène des Colonies Françaises*, having no particular interest for business or commerce, could be held.

The changes which have taken place in the ensuing fifteen years, while they are comprehensive neither in the museums they include, nor in their action within individual museums, have all been in the direction of the enhancement of the aesthetic values of the productions of the primitive peoples. Several important museums, notably the British Museum and the Museum of the Congo, still adhere to the "principle of the precedence of collecting over exhibiting."²² Several others however, including those of Berlin, Munich, Vienna, Paris, and Cologne, have considerably modified their original purely documentary purpose. In Munich, for example, where the installation has been carried out on an "art-historical-aesthetic" basis, "the best pieces have been so emphasized, through their placing and lighting, that they can be grasped by the hasty visitor who has only an artistic interest."²³ At the *Trocadéro*, the reorganization instituted by Rivet and Rivière in 1928 separated public halls from study rooms, and included in the former the "unique objects," shown as such, as well as the "most characteristic objects" of various regions. And although Rivière has protested that the ethnographer must treat all his objects alike, the *Trocadéro* has held numerous exhibitions which have in effect been exhibitions of art.²⁴ (Benin, 1932; Dakar-Djibouti, Marquesas, 1934; Eskimo, 1935.) In Vienna the collecting principle

was exchanged for a "cultural-documentary" one, which, in satisfying scientific necessity did not neglect contemporary aesthetic demands.²⁵ In Cologne during the last five years the orientation has been in the same direction, with an emphasis on the individual objects.²⁶

What conclusions may we draw from this brief history? It is clear that the consideration of the aesthetic values of primitive objects of art comes late in the development of museums of ethnology. It comes, indeed, not only considerably after the beginning of such an appreciation on the part of artists and private collectors, but, as a comparison with the second part of this chapter will show, and as is only natural, not until sometime after the ethnologists themselves had begun to revise their low opinion of primitive art.²⁷ Omitting its occasional earlier manifestations, as it is shown in the work of Jones, Andrée, and Balfour, we may date the beginnings of this revision in the first decade of the twentieth century in the writings of Verworn, Koch-Gruenberg, and Breuil; and its culmination about 1925 in works by Vatter, Boas, Lowie, Rattray, and Sydow. From this time on considerations of ethnology play a more important part, and pure aesthetic considerations a less important one, in the interpretation of primitive works of art.

We cannot say, then, that the museums led and guided the taste of artists and private collectors. But the large body of material assembled in the museums and ready for the inspection, even if only with great difficulty, of the aesthetically minded should not be neglected.¹ Not only was it there to be examined when taste became ready for it, as in Dresden and Paris; but it is probable that such a long and unconscious association—it can hardly be called familiarity—with the objects of primitive art was one of the elements in the preparation of this taste. In our next section we will take up an allied preference, one that was both an influenced and an influencing element, the attitude toward primitive art of the working ethnologists.

Chronology of Ethnographical Museums and Exhibitions

- 1800 About this date Vienna bought some of Cook's South Sea objects for the *Hofmuseum*.
- 1850 An ethnographical collection already exists in Hamburg.
- 1854 Universal Exposition, Paris. The project of an ethnographical museum begins to take form.
- 1856 Berlin forms an "ethnographical section" in connection with the museum of antiquities.
- 1865 The Christy collection presented to the British Museum.
- 1867 The Museum of Antiquities, St. Germain-en-Laye is founded.
- 1868 Adolf Bastian founds the Berlin *Königliche Museum für Völkerkunde*, and becomes professor at the university.
- 1869 Leipzig group headed by Hermann Obst buys the Gustav Klemm (Dresden) ethnographical collection.
- 1872 Foundation of the *Nordiska Museet*, Stockholm.
- 1874 The Leipzig ethnographical museum is opened.
- 1875 Hofrat Meyer, in Dresden, founds the anthropological-ethnographical museum of the State of Saxony.
- 1875 Founding of the *Museo preistorico ed etnografico* in Rome, through Professor Pigorini's activity.
- 1876 Adolf Bastian made director of the Berlin museums.
- 1877 The Hamburg Museum becomes the *Museum für Völkerkunde*.
- 1878 E.-T. Hamy founds the *Trocadéro*, Paris. Made possible through the impulse given by the universal exposition.
- 1883 The Christy Collection is moved into the British Museum.
- 1884 The Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology is founded.
- 1885 By this date there are local ethnological museums in Florence, Venice, Milan, and Turin.
- 1885 The Leipzig Museum bought the Godefroy (Hamburg) Oceanic Collection.
- 1887 London Colonial Exposition. All objects of material culture from various regions exhibited in confusion.
- 1889 Paris *Exposition Universelle*. Many Oceanic objects, though few of artistic value, shown; while from West Africa only a few Ashanti things.
- 1892 Special African exhibition at the Leipzig Museum.
- 1894 Antwerp international exposition.
- 1896 New Leipzig Museum building opened with sections for the South Seas, Asia, Africa, and America.
- 1897 Tervueren exposition of the Congo. (Part of the universal exposition.) Formed the basis for the Tervueren Museum.
- 1898 The *Annales* of the Tervueren Museum start.

- 1899 The Wilhelm Joest Collection (principally Asiatic objects) given to the City of Cologne by the Rautenstrauchs.
- 1904 André Level began collecting African sculpture.
- 1905 Vlaminck, Matisse, Picasso, and Derain began to collect African sculpture.
- 1905 Musulman Exposition, Algiers.
- 1906 Cologne ethnographical museum (Rautenstrauch-Joest) opened.
- 1907 Opening of the prehistoric section of the Leipzig Museum.
- 1907 to 1909: Tervueren Museum aids the Torday-Joyce Congo Expedition, which brings back much "art."
- 1908 Tervueren Museum's new building is opened.
- 1908 Frankfurt a/M. opens its ethnological museum (begun 1902).
- 1908 Léonce Rosenberg, Paris, begins collecting African sculpture.
- 1910 The *Trocadéro* opens its Oceanic Hall.
- 1910 Tervueren Museum is reorganized.
- 1910 Munich Exhibition of Mohammedan art.
- 1914 Formation of the *Société des Amis du Trocadéro*.
- 1914 to 1918: German scholars worked at the Tervueren Museum.
- 1915 *Negerplastik*, by Carl Einstein; the first book devoted exclusively to African sculpture.
- 1917 *Sculptures Nègres*, by Paul Guillaume and Guillaume Apollinaire; the first book in French on African art.
- 1919 *Première Exposition d'Art Nègre et d'Art Océanien*; Paris at the Devambez Gallery.
- 1921 Leipzig Museum, exhibition of negro sculpture.
- 1922 Leipzig Museum, *Ahnenkult* exhibition.
- 1923 *Exposition de l'Art Indigène des Colonies françaises d'Afrique et d'Océanie*; Paris.
- 1926 Munich Museum reorganized on a *kunstwissenschaftlich-ästhetisch* basis.
- 1928 Reorganization of the *Trocadéro*; greater artistic appeal.
- 1930 Vienna Museum reorganized according to a cultural-documentary method.
- 1930 Exhibition at the *Galérie Pigalle*, Paris.

Notes:

The Development of Ethnological Museums

¹ See below, Chapter II.

² For an account of the general theoretical development of ethnology *cf.* Radin, Paul, *The Method and Theory of Ethnology* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1933).

³ For good accounts of this process *cf.*: Lucas, Charles P., *The Partition and Colonisation of Africa* (Oxford: University Press, 1922); and Scholfield, *The Pacific: Its Past and Future* (London: John Murray, 1919).

- ⁴ Moulin, Alfred, *L'Afrique à travers les âges* (Paris: Ollendorf, n. d.).
- ⁵ See the chronology given below.
- ⁶ De Siebold, Ph. Fr., *Lettre sur l'utilité des Musées Ethnographiques et sur l'importance de leur création dans les états européens qui possèdent des Colonies* (Paris: Librairie de l'Institut, 1843), p. 10.
- ⁷ *Loc. cit.*
- ⁸ For the sources of this chronology, see the bibliography.
- ⁹ Bahnson, Kristian, "Ueber ethnographischen Museen," *Mittheilungen der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien*, XVIII (1888), 109-164. Weule, K. "Das Museum fuer Voelkerkunde zu Leipzig," *Jahrbuch des Museums fuer Voelkerkunde zu Leipzig*, VI (1913-14), 23-28. *British Museum, Handbook to the Ethnographical Collections* (London: British Museum, 1925), p. 1.
- ^{9a} Bahnson, *op. cit.*, p. 116. Hamy, E. T., *Les Origines du Musée d'Ethnographie. Histoire et Documents*, (Paris: E. Leroux, 1890), p. 53. Note that the foundation of the Trocadéro falls just outside the third quarter of the century (1878).
- ¹⁰ Bahnson, *loc. cit.*
- ¹¹ Hamy, *op. cit.*, p. 52.
- ^{11a} The *Nordiska Museet* was founded by Arthur Hazelius in order to show the popular art tradition of Sweden.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 55-60.
- ¹³ Hamy, E. T., *Etudes ethnographiques et archéologiques sur L'Exposition Coloniale et Indienne de Londres* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1887), pp. 13-14, and *passim*.
- ¹⁴ *Exposition Universelle Internationale de 1889*, "Catalogue d'Ethnographie," *Catalogue Générale* (Lille: L. Daniel, 1889), pp. 126-130.
- ¹⁵ Bahnson, *op. cit.*, *passim*.
- ¹⁶ See below, Chapter I, Part II; especially concerning the Semperians and the Darwinians.
- ¹⁷ Von Luschan, Felix, *Die Altertuermer von Benin* (3 vols.; Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1919), Introduction.
- ¹⁸ Krause, Fritz, "Das Museum fuer Voelkerkunde zu Leipzig," *Ethnologische Studien* (Leipzig: Verlag der Asia Major, 1929), pp. 106-33.
- ¹⁹ Torday, F. and T. A. Joyce, "Les Bushongo," *Annales du Musée du Congo Belge*, sér. 3 (1910), tome 2, fasc. 1, p. 204.
- ²⁰ Maes, J., "L'Ethnologie de l'Afrique Centrale et Le Musée du Congo Belge," *Africa*, VII (1934), 174-190.
- ²¹ Verneau, R., "Le Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro," *L'Anthropologie*, XXIX (1918-19), 547-60.
- ²² Blauensteiner, Kurt, "Bildwerke aus Benin im wiener Museum fuer Voelkerkunde," *Belvedere*, X (1931), no. 9, p. 36. The Pitt-Rivers Museum in Oxford perhaps preserves most purely the "original" state of an early ethnological collection. It is an unforgettable sight, particularly in contrast with modern installations.

- ²³ Schmidt, Walter, "Das Museum fuer Voelkerkunde in Muenchen," *Die Form*, V (1930), 398.
- ²⁴ Rivière, Georges-Henri, "Musée de Beaux-Arts ou Musée d'Ethnographie," Hilaire, Georges (Editor), *Musées: Enquête internationale sur la réforme des galeries publiques* (Paris: Cahiers de la République, n. d.), p. 67. The ethnological material of the *Trocadéro* is now being incorporated into the new *Musée de l'Homme*.
- ²⁵ Blauensteiner, *loc. cit.*
- ²⁶ Lips, Julius, verbally, October, 1935. The magnificent aesthetic presentation of *African Negro Art* at the Museum of Modern Art in the Spring of 1935, though not European, also deserves mention.
- ²⁷ See below, Chapter I, Part II.

CHAPTER I: PART II

THE EVALUATION OF THE ART OF PRIMITIVE PEOPLES

IN THE first part of this chapter we have outlined the material evidence for the interest in the arts of the primitive peoples: the birth and growth of the museums and the collections devoted to their arts. We have seen what began as a purely scientific interest, if not replaced, at least largely augmented by a lively aesthetic appreciation. Thus the original purely documentary presentation of the objects and their unconsidered mixture with other, purely scientific, ethnological evidence, was no longer considered adequate to their special artistic character. This change in the museum, though partly due to outside influence, must be the reflection of a similar change in the theoretical point of view of the ethnologists who were responsible for the gathering and arrangement of the show-cases in the museums. Striking testimony that this is indeed the fact can be found in the writings of those ethnologists—testimony perhaps less tangible than museum exhibits, but no less weighty for all that. It constitutes, in effect, a complete revaluation of primitive art, gradual in its stages, yet completed in the span of some fifty years. It is a change in taste—from an initial neglect through an interest that presupposed little worth in the objects with which it dealt, to the laudation and admiration of the present-day—which is all the more interesting because it is found in the work of men who are supposed to have the unbiased, objective attitude of the scientist, but who nevertheless have completely revised their aesthetic opin-

ions. It is important to point out, moreover, that the change in point of view was not forced upon anthropologists and ethnologists by the introduction of new material for their consideration. By 1885, all the important types of primitive art, with the single exception of that of Benin, which was known only in isolated though excellent examples, were accessible to workers in this field.¹ Many pieces of sculpture and the minor arts were no doubt not even seen by explorers and travelers, although they must have looked at them, and very few were collected and brought home; but such omissions were due to a blindness inherent in attitude, rather than to any physical obstacle placed in the way of study and accession. This attitude, though fundamentally aesthetic in character and arising from contemporary aesthetic standards, was affected by the generally disdainful opinion of primitive peoples which prevailed throughout the nineteenth century, and which was influenced by and useful to the achievement of imperialist programs even if originating in evolutionary theory.² The "white man's burden" has had its effects even in the arts.

The best statement of the initial position of the ethnologist is to be found in Edward Tylor's *Primitive Culture*, which was first published in 1871. That this statement, occurring in a two-volume work which to this day remains a classic in its field, is given largely by omission is no accident, but merely indicative of a typical point of view. In the whole of his work, Tylor has no separate chapter on the arts; and though there is a bare mention of the "really artistic portraits" of the French caves, he does not deal with the independent arts at all.³ Tylor's main concern throughout his work, as he himself states, is "that of determining the relation of the mental condition of savages to that of civilized man." In this task he finds that the development of the material arts forms an "excellent guide and safeguard to keep before our minds."⁴ It is hardly necessary to point out that Tylor considers this development in a purely technical sense, and that it does not redound to the advantage of the mentality of

savages. What is significant is that it did not occur to Tylor that savages might have arts other than material ones, or that these might be worth examination.

The reason for Tylor's point of view becomes clear if we consider the statements of some of his contemporaries about primitive art. Sir John Lubbock, for example, in a chapter dealing with the beginnings of *Arts and Ornaments* is surprised that although the Polynesians are in many ways much more advanced than the Eskimos, and are skillful in ornamentation, they represent plants and animals but poorly.⁵ What pleases him in the productions of the African negroes, is that though their idols are not works of art, still "they not only represent men, but give some of the African characteristics with grotesque fidelity"; and for this reason he finds that they do not completely lack the idea of art.⁶ In the production of the Eskimos there seems to be a technical anomaly which Lubbock cannot understand, in that of the Africans there is a technical ability which catches his attention. The conception of faithful naturalistic representation as the touchstone of artistic value also dominates Oldfield's account of the New Hollanders who are unable to recognize colored engravings of themselves (how far we now consider such engravings from photographic reality!), and can only "realize" "rude" and "exaggerated" drawings.⁷ The same is also true of Dawkins' judgment, which, as we shall see, was later twice criticized on just the grounds of his realistic assumptions, that Neolithic men had fallen far below the paleolithic standard in the arts of design because their engravings are geometric in character, and "they have not left behind any well-defined representations of plants or animals."⁸

Contemporary with this attitude in England, and similar to it both in its causes and in its evaluations of the primitive arts, was the attitude of the Semperians in Germany. Gottfried Semper's *Der Stil in den technischen und tektonischen Künsten* was published in 1861, and it dominated the consideration of the early arts for the next

quarter of a century.⁹ Semper's own theory was two-fold: he derived the arts from an original purely practical need for shelter and protection from the elements, the productions thus arising being later modified to satisfy artistic as well as practical demands. And secondly, he found in all the arts certain motifs, which though continually modified and varied, persisted in them all; and which had their own origins in a basic motif or "type" whose form was due to the primary technical considerations of the art at its most elementary level.¹⁰ All the decorative elements and the artistic symbols which architecture in its developed forms uses Semper derived originally from the decoration of the body and from connected primitive industry. He opposed the derivation of ornament from natural floral motifs and derived it rather from technical processes which continued to be copied after the processes which conditioned their origin had disappeared.¹¹ Semper himself never worked out his theories in detail for any of the arts besides architecture, in which his main interest lay; but they were taken up and applied, or rather distorted for application, to the other arts by his followers.¹² Thus it was assumed that the most stylized, non-naturalistic period of any art, its most "geometric" phase, was necessarily the oldest, since it lay nearer to its original determination by the purely technical necessity of a craft. In accordance with this method von Conze assigns what we now know to be sixth century Greek work of a developed and refined style (and which, let it be noted, we admire greatly), to a much earlier and more primitive period.¹³ Because of this prejudice against the non-naturalistic, the paleolithic paintings which we have seen that Tylor singled out, were for a long time simply omitted from consideration as a part of early art because they were too naturalistic to fit into the over-stylized picture of what such an art should be.¹⁴ We need not, in order to explain the Semperians' point of view, follow Riegl's estimate of them as the victims of a pernicious materialistic philosophy.¹⁵ We may say rather that it was due to a naturalistic

aesthetic which graded works of art in accordance with what was considered their accurate imitation of nature, and which found support in a theory of purely technical evolution. Where the "degeneration" of a certain period cannot be proved (and the conception of "degeneration" and that of the surmounting of technical limitations are certainly not materialistic) any such theory must hold a geometric, non-naturalistic art to be both chronologically and aesthetically primitive.

That Semper's theories in themselves did not necessitate a low opinion of primitive, nor a high opinion of contemporary art is sufficiently shown in Owen Jones' *Grammar of Ornament*. Jones took over Semper's theory of the technical basis of art, but coupled with it a very high opinion of primitive ornament. With an enthusiasm surprising for his time (though it must be remembered that he is dealing only with ornament), Jones asserts that in savage ornament the "true balance of both form and color" is always maintained; and echoes a much more celebrated primitivist when he says, "if we would return to a more healthy condition, we must even be as little children or as savages," and thus develop a fitting ornament through the unhampered working of our natural instincts.¹⁶

Schweinfurth (*Artes Africanæ*, 1875) too, can be enthusiastic about the African arts, although similarly, while using such a comprehensive title, he refers to ornamental decoration alone.¹⁷

The study of this phase of savage art was further carried on in England in the last decade of the nineteenth century. The assumptions which underlay this study were very different from those of Jones. Influenced by Darwinian theory, the English ethnologists turned their attention to the evolution of art, and characteristically, to the evolution of ornament, not because ornament was at the aesthetic base of art, but because it seemed to them to be at the historical beginning. They sought to apply to art the principles of natural selection and thus to discover the laws of its development.

In *Evolution in Art*, Alfred Haddon is contemptuously content to leave the aesthetic study of art to the professional art critic.¹⁸ What interests him is the "biological treatment of art. Nor (he continues) need surprise be felt if an attempt is made to deal with art as a branch of biology. For is not art necessarily associated with intelligence? Is not intelligence a function of the brain? And is not the brain composed of some form of protoplasm? Art is thus one only of the myriad results of the activity of protoplasm."¹⁹ And Haddon's theory is but one of the myriad results of the very vague applications of Darwin's specific investigation. Haddon and others conducted experiments in the successive copying of a naturalistic representation of an object, which showed that the original was gradually conventionalized and simplified beyond any resemblance to its former self.²⁰ Though for these experiments he did not use artists (and thereby showed what he thought of the primitive artist), Haddon concluded that all stylization in primitive art was the result of a similar process, and was due to lack of skill on the part of a series of savage artists, who copied, or rather tried to copy, each other because they were not equal to copying from nature. This process, which, significantly, he called "degeneration," was unconscious and not due to any choice on the part of the savage. The possession of such an artistic faculty Haddon could not imagine: "It is inconceivable that a savage should copy or adapt a certain design because it promises to develop into a more pleasing pattern."²¹ And he supposed that no one who possessed such a faculty would apply it to any end but copying nature to the best of his ability. Haddon's notions are of course not the result of a well thought out theory of aesthetic creation, but simply of those implicit in his bodily transference of a theory of purely physical evolution into the realm of the psychological.

Haddon was not alone in his views. He was enthusiastically supported by Charles Read and Colley March who were also writing towards the close of the century. March agrees with Haddon in deny-

ing "the geometric origin of pattern-making," and quotes Professor Goodyear and W. H. Holmes as maintaining the same opinions.²²

The almost exclusive concern of the investigators of this period with primitive ornament is indicative of the peculiar bias of their aesthetic attitude. They were searching for the origins of art, and thought they had found them in a stylized ornament, which, if they could not appreciate, they could at least explain as the misapplication of a naturalistic art impulse, in spite of the wide divergence of its final result from its intention. They took no notice of the products of the other arts because the forms were at such a variance with contemporary aesthetic standards, and submitted to no such explanation as could be used to account for the equally strange ornamental forms. March, for example, says of the higher arts only that ". . . they are modelled upon nature and kept in touch with natural phenomena."²³ This is, indeed, a vague enough statement, and one to which varying schools of aesthetics might agree; but that it is to be interpreted in its narrowest sense may be inferred from Henry Balfour's contemporary criticism of "most writers" (and of Boyd Dawkins in particular) who consider the neolithic inferior to the paleolithic period in the arts of design. He holds, on the contrary, that this is true only of the "realistic style," while there was a considerable advance in "fanciful design"; the "'School' was a very different one, but by no means necessarily inferior."²⁴ A few years later E.-T. Hamy of Paris, who like Balfour writes in the tone of one of the minority, also took objection to the denigrating point of view of writers of the school of Boyd Dawkins and Oldfield. Defending the artistic endowment of the savage against Sir John Lubbock, Hamy insists that there is no branch of the human race which is "absolutely without" some works of art, no matter how simple they may be; that all men are capable of reproducing objects which strike their attention; and that neither the New Hollanders, whom Oldfield cites, nor the Bushmen, whom Lubbock had men-

tioned as not even being able to recognize their own photographs, are without artistic aptitude.²⁵ After such a long and spirited defense, Hamy's conclusion is more than a little surprising: "From the point of view of the arts of design," he says, "as from so many other points of view, savages are true children; they draw, they mess in paints, they model, like children."²⁶ And Hamy claims, as others have claimed since, that where we lack the evidence of savage art we can follow the aesthetic evolution of mankind in the development of the abilities of our children.²⁷

It is quite in harmony for Maurice Delafosse to find many similarities between Egyptian sculpture and that of the Ivory Coast, considering them both cast in a uniform mold and their works typical and monotonous. He agrees with Maspero that Egyptian sculpture is a "mixture of naive science and wishful awkwardness" and finds these same characteristics in the masks and fetishes of the Ivory Coast.²⁸

In Germany too during the last years of the century, the savages' intelligence and creative capacity were being defended in this somewhat back-hand manner, showing perhaps more clearly than could a downright condemnation of their arts the assumptions of taste and value which lay behind the consideration of primitive art. A. R. Hein has been credited with being the first of the ethnologists to point out the aesthetic worth of non-classic ornament.²⁹ He laments the fact that the history of art has not considered it worthwhile to treat the primitive arts, and that the aestheticians have not found the subject to their liking.³⁰ He points out that there is no connection between the quality of the material culture of a civilization and the quality of its art, and that outstanding ability to represent and trenchant observation of nature are to be found even at the comparatively lowest culture levels.³¹ The meaning of such general observation seems to be clear to us, but our understanding of Hein's position becomes somewhat obscured by his more particular judgments. Thus

in seeking to account for the art of the Dayaks, which he treats at some length, he does so by classing them with the Asiatics in general: "The art impulse of the Orientals, who are by their nature little gifted in the higher arts, before all seeks to achieve enjoyment by ennobling the objects of daily use according to the promptings of a subjective aesthetic."³² A more recent view would surely revise both Hein's ideas on Chinese and Japanese art, and its connection with that of the Dayaks.

The views of Hjalmar Stolpe on the origin of ornament, which he considered at the base of all art, were very similar to those of the English school. Also a realist, he thought that the stylization, or conventionalizing of ornament was due primarily to the technical (not the aesthetic) unsuitability as decoration of more realistic designs, and in addition to the desire of savages to repeat as often as possible representations having a symbolic content. Although he agrees with Read as to the realism of the original art-impulse, he finds other causes for the "degradation" of designs. "The perception of what would be the most suitable decoration for any particular space was no doubt well developed amongst a people so far advanced in technical skill. A desire to display as many images of the god in question is unmistakable. Moreover, an inclination to symbolism always obtains in mystic religions."³³ Elsewhere, Stolpe ridicules the view that ornament could have arisen as the "product of fantasy," or could have arisen from so vain an occupation as a "sport with lines, without other aim than to satisfy a 'sense of beauty.'"³⁴

Direct opposition to Stolpe's opinion is voiced by Karl von den Steinen in the course of his study of the art of the Xingu tribe of Brazil. Even those men most bereft of culture, he says, take a simple and direct pleasure in copying; and, likening their art to that of children, he believes that there has been too much attempted interpretation of what is not necessarily picture-writing at all, but is in most cases simply representation done without practical necessity

and only for the pleasure in the doing.³⁵ Von den Steinen studies not alone ornament, but the drawing, sculpture, and masks of the Indians as well, thus showing an interest considerably beyond that of his predecessors. Koch-Gruenberg, whose material also comes from South America, agrees with von den Steinen that most savage art is not an attempt at picture-writing. He considers that the savage "has a developed sense of beauty and sense for beautifying, and uses every opportunity to busy himself artistically. . . . Wherever he is able he allows his artistic sense to reign."³⁶ Richard Andrée agrees with these views, and thinks that the artistic ability of savages has been much under-rated.³⁷

But as late as 1913 Tessmann, studying the art of the Fang, whose sculpture is now considered among the finest of any African production, concentrates most of his attention upon the derivation and geometrization of ornamental motifs. He mentions the sculpture only in passing because he sees in it no particular characteristics which distinguish it from the work of other African peoples. "The figures . . . with an ever recurring lack of expression, in spite of a superficiality in their rendering of form, seem to me to have a certain lovable naïveté and quiet humor."³⁸

More fundamental in their criticism of the previous evaluation of primitive art were Emil Stephan and Max Verworn. Quoting Riegl, Woelfflin, and Lange, Stephan points out the necessary relativity of such concepts as "true to nature" and "stylized," which have changed even in the course of European art, and the consequent impossibility of judging primitive art in those terms.³⁹ Verworn, who writes as a psychologist, emphasizes the one-sidedness of previous psychological interpretations of art, and their assumptions of a traditional aesthetic. "The norm of all psychological studies of art has always reflected only the idea of beauty of civilized races. . . . In reality the field is infinitely larger."⁴⁰ And Verworn divides art into "physio-plastic" and "ideo-plastic" types, the former due to a direct connection be-

tween sensation and motor innervation, the latter to the interference of association in the sensory-motor arc.⁴¹ Whatever implications of value there are here are in favor of an ideo-plastic, or non-naturalistic style.

The Darwinian theories, as we have already seen, had strongly influenced the study of primitive ornament; the development of art was treated as a part of natural evolution, and savage art was considered its lowest form. The Darwinian method, though less uncompromisingly applied, is also evident in the work of Ernst Grosse and Yrjö Hirn, whose books, of a more general character, were influential in England and the United States. Grosse confines himself to the social aspects of artistic production, and studies primitive art "as a social phenomenon and a social function" because we can understand savage productions only within the context of the "forms of culture in which they arose."⁴² Hirn has an even stronger objection to intellectualist theories of art, and believes that the art impulse is a form of social expression of evolutionary value.⁴³ He will not commit himself to a belief in the "purely aesthetic and autotelic character of the individual works of art," objects to the theories of Schiller and Spencer because art is better able to satisfy the "*greatest* and most *fundamental* instincts of man" than sports or games; and devotes the greater part of his book to an examination of "the most powerful non-aesthetic factors that have favored the origin and development of the several Art forms."⁴⁴ Grosse, however, objects to the constant comparison of the drawings of primitive peoples with those of children, finding a lack of perspective their only similarity; while he insists that aesthetic needs are no more foreign to primitive than to civilized man.⁴⁵

Similar in its treatment of art from the point of view of its external motivations and influences to the exclusion of its aesthetic variations, was the French group of sociologists in which the outstanding names are those of Guyau, Durkheim, and Reinach.⁴⁶ Their interest

was rather in art as a social and more particularly as a religious manifestation. Guyau, for example, conceives of art as an "extraordinarily intense form of sympathy and sociability, which can satisfy itself only by creating a new world." These men thought that the impulse back of the beginnings of art and of its simpler expressions was primarily symbolic; and where they considered at all the individual forms taken by this art, it was to explain the variety of meanings packed into them and not to analyze their peculiar artistic character.

We have already mentioned the opposition of Alois Riegl to the followers of Semper, the technicalists.⁴⁷ He exposes to ironic ridicule the philologic-historical method and the purely materialistic philosophy, which, in distortion of Semper's own views, they have applied to the explanation of artistic forms. ". . . One could not be so uncultured and naïve as to believe that, by some chance, one people could have copied a simple meander from another."⁴⁸ Riegl comes to the defense of the "geometric" style and its value as an aesthetic product. He points out that its forms, while they are not copies, are nevertheless not to be placed "outside" of nature since they conform to the same laws of symmetry and rhythm as natural objects and "naturalistic" art forms. Neither is the result of purely technical considerations; both are the results of particular "wills-to-form," which change from place to place and from people to people and dominate and use limitations of material and method. Far from being a degeneration of naturalism, the geometric style has the same relation to it "as the laws of mathematics to the laws of living nature."⁴⁹ The whole theory of the technical origin of art simply pushes the premises one step further back. "We would rather say at the start that there is a certain something in people which permits them to find pleasure in beautiful forms, and which the adherents of the technical-material theory of the development of art are as little in a position to define as are we—and that this something has freely and independently created the geometrical line-combination; without first forcing in a

material go-between that in the last analysis makes nothing any clearer, and at best can only lead to a wretched seeming success of a materialistic philosophy."⁵⁰

Riegl is, in effect, forcing attention to the forms of art, whether naturalistic or abstract, as they appear as finished products. He is opposing an evolutionary point of view which seeks the explanation of each thing as a forerunner of that thing rather than in itself. His intention is simply to induce consideration of the abstract styles as styles, to place them on the same level as the more naturalistic, not to elevate them to a unique position. But it is precisely to raise them to this position that certain German historians have more recently made use of Riegl's theories, and he was made, as it has lately been said he would have meant to be, the prophet of an expressionism whose beginning he just lived to see.⁵¹

The men who invoked his name were, however, intimately connected with the expressionist movement. Woelfflin remarks that it is only through "remarkable parallels in certain developments in modern painting" that the qualities of the frozen style of the Bamberg Apocalypse have come to be appreciated in a positive fashion.⁵² The expressionist connection is obvious in the work of Wilhelm Worringer, at once the champion of the Gothic, the Oriental, and the Modern. Upon Worringer's general theories we do not have to enlarge.⁵³ His "rehabilitation of the Gothic," his dichotomy between abstraction and empathy, based upon a misunderstanding of Lipps' theory, his Oriental man beyond all knowledge, are very familiar. It is through him that Riegl's will-to-form was made a popular phrase. What is important for our study is his idealization of the artistic will-to-form of primitive art, an impulse which he places at the beginning of the line of development which culminates in the Gothic, and in which the Classic period is but a brief (and mistaken) interlude. According to Worringer, primitive man is "confused and alarmed by life," and seeks refuge from its apparent arbitrariness in

“the intuitive creation of absolute values. In untrammelled spiritual activity primitive man created for himself symbols of the absolute in geometric or stereometric forms.” His art may be “an exorcism and a negation of life,” but it has, nevertheless, “an inevitable character.”

“Thus for primitive man the artistic assimilation of the phenomena of the outer world is bound up with the incorporeal, inexpressive line and . . . with the plane surface. . . . The result of this avoidance of any approximation to life in stylistic purpose was an approximation to abstract cubic elementary forms . . . artistic representation of organic life, even in the case of sculpture, was again removed to the higher domain of an abstract, inanimate orderliness, and became, instead of a reproduction of what is conditioned, the symbol of the unconditioned, of the inevitable.”⁵⁴

In its impulse towards abstraction primitive art is the forerunner of Oriental, Egyptian, and modern art.

The work of Leo Frobenius is a more striking example of the idealization of the art of primitive man. More striking because Frobenius is specifically an ethnologist, because he makes more explicit the connection he finds between primitive and modern art, and because his writings have an economic and political as well as an aesthetic motivation. Worringer finds German inseparable from Gothic; but Frobenius discovers a direct connection between the Faustian and the African soul: in the Arabian Nights everything is fore-ordained, and there is the Oriental feeling of the inevitable balance of world forces, the idea of a necessary “revanche.”⁵⁵ Only in Parsifal and in the Nigerland epics is there the conception of the fate-conquering individual; only the Occidental has the idea of the character-development of the individual who rises above the material forces around him.⁵⁶ Only the West can conceive of an infinite space, in which not alone the body, as in the East, but the soul too can live.⁵⁷ For centuries the West has been absorbing the opium and morphine of the East along with its porcelain, its silks, and its rugs.

"All (the work of the Orient) was essentially akin to the feminine French, but has been for us Germans, in every period of our expanding strength, the expression of an oriental lethargy. How different our relation to this giant Africa! Our youth demands nature. The rediscovery of the oldest simple ties with nature, a return to naturalness. Art calls for simplification. And out of this longing arises the style now first awakening in opposing tendencies: in the compulsion towards original primitiveness that appears in this essence of Africa, in this untrimmed coarseness, in this childlike naturalism; and seems to be related to our own childhood."⁵⁸

The true greatness of African art, however, does not lie in its childishness; on the contrary it lies in a quality which can be traced back to the Stone Age, though it has been discovered and appreciated only lately, namely in "the unfailing ability to conceive of style."⁵⁹ In both Worringer and Frobenius there is a more obvious extra-ethnological bias than in most of the men we have been studying. We cannot be concerned here with the causes and implications of that bias. It is significant, however, that about 1905 and in the following years such an attitude was able to make use of a paeon on the primitive arts in order to further its purposes. Ten years before, as our review thus far has shown, this would have been impossible; ten years later it would have been unnecessary.

The first work to review the whole field of primitive art in a comprehensive fashion was Herbert Kuehn's *Die Kunst der Primitiven*, which appeared in 1923. Kuehn's analysis is an aesthetic and stylistic one, and he attempts to establish the underlying basis of the styles he discusses. His conclusions and implied valuations are much the same as, and probably derived from, Worringer's, though his reasoning is very different. Kuehn discovers in primitive art two fundamentally differing kinds of form, one "sensory," or naturalistic, the other "imaginative," or abstract. Sensory art expresses itself by "imitation" in the Aristotelian meaning; while imaginative art looks in contrast for "the eternal one in things, the essential, the law. It searches for the mysticism of the triangle, the basic symbol of the

circle, the quietude of the rectangle.”⁶⁰ In the one the world overshadows the soul; the other turns to questions of self-inquiry, to absorption in eternity. To uncover the causes of these styles we must look deeper than the simple dying-out or the discovery of a fashion; such theories are based on individual psychology and do not suffice.⁶¹ Looking for causes, Kuehn finds a correlation between types of economic structure and the kinds of art they produce. Thus the sensory styles are the products of parasitic societies, hunting people among the primitive, the Athenian empire in the ancient world, capitalist economy in the modern world; while the imaginative styles are produced by symbiotic, or self-subsistent societies, primitive agriculturalists, sixth century Greece, the Middle Ages. Our time is able to appreciate both the abstract and the naturalist kinds of art because we are at a turning-point in the history of art, at the end of a long period of sensory production, at the beginning of a period of imaginative forms. Neither the rise of expressionism nor the interest of art historians in abstract styles is accidental: a change in society caused the one and the change in art in its turn caused the other.⁶² The validity of Kuehn’s correlation may be doubted, certainly even at first glance there are many exceptions; the relative value he accords to sensory and imaginative forms is obvious. He is making use of an aesthetic evaluation very similar to that of Frobenius to further political and economic views that are exactly opposed.

It is clear that the ethnologists whom we have been discussing look with favor upon primitive art just because it is at the opposite pole from the post-renaissance European tradition. They are not primarily interested in the unique qualities of primitive art, in those qualities which distinguish it from all other art, but in those characteristics which set it off from the art of the nineteenth century in common with other periods and styles such as the Oriental and Medieval. There are other modern students of primitive peoples, whom we may class as a group, who carry this point of view still

further. They see in early art a manifestation little different from those that have come afterwards. These men consider the impulse to aesthetic expression a primary, or fundamental, factor in human nature, one which as such is essentially similar in prehistoric, primitive, and modern civilized man. They postulate what we may call a constant aesthetic urge, and think that the art of primitive people is successful in its full satisfaction of this aesthetic sense. They thus see the origin of art as something free and un-conditioned, owing nothing to external catalytics. Discussing the origin of quaternary art, the Abbé Brueil says: "If art for art's sake had not come into being, magical or religious art would never have existed. But if magical or religious ideas had not permeated this 'art for art's sake,' including it in the more serious preoccupations of real life, art, insufficiently esteemed, would have remained primitive in the extreme."⁶³ Brueil's pupil, Luquet, takes objection to Reinach's statement that "the impulse behind the art of the Reindeer Age is bound to the development of magic," since sympathetic magic is based on the idea of the power given to the artist by representation, so that this idea had to be preceded by the idea of representation itself:⁶⁴ ". . . The sorcerer artists had been inevitably preceded by artists pure and simple, and I consider it impossible for figured art to have been anything but a disinterested activity in its initial phase."⁶⁵ Nor is the origin of figured art to be found in decorative patterns, but as with children it results from fortuitous lines given a figured interpretation. "Thus one must look for (its) origin in lines traced with no more a decorative than a figured intent, but simply for the sake of executing."⁶⁶

We may class the opinions of Franz Boas with the point of view of these two Frenchmen. Although drawing his material in the main from entirely different sources (the art of the American Indian), and himself part of a different tradition of ethnology, Boas puts the primitive aesthetic impulse at the same high level. He says in the introduction to *Primitive Art*:

"In one way or another aesthetic pleasure is felt by all members of mankind. No matter how diverse the ideals of beauty may be, the general character of the enjoyment of beauty is of the same order everywhere; the crude song of the Siberians, the dance of the African Negroes, the pantomime of the California Indians, the stone work of the New Zealanders, the carvings of the Melanesians, the sculpture of the Alaskans appeal to them in a manner not different from that felt by us when we hear a song, when we see an artistic dance, or when we admire ornamental work, painting, or sculpture. The very existence of song, dance, painting, and sculpture among all the tribes known to us is proof of the craving to produce things that are felt as satisfying through their form, and of the capability of man to enjoy them."⁸⁷

Boas emphasizes the close connection of the technical tradition which gives a basis for judgment and the correlated standard of beauty, yet he agrees with Riegl that "the will to produce an aesthetic result is the essence of artistic work."⁸⁸ He points out the two-fold source of artistic effect, form and associated meaning, but believes that art cannot be discussed upon the assumption that the beginning of art is to be found in the latter, "or that, like language, art is a form of expression. . . . Significance of artistic form is neither universal nor can it be shown that it is necessarily older than the form."⁸⁹ Boas' approach to primitive art and his consideration of the problems involved in it is thus opposed to the previous ones of Hirn and Grosse, even though he has given us searching analyses of the derivation and evolution of ornamental forms and the social place of the other arts, and his assumption of the attainment by primitive peoples of a technical standard of perfection shows how far he has moved from those who imagined that the forms of primitive art were due to a manual inability to carry out desired ideas.

Alfred Vierkandt shares this attitude toward primitive art. Realizing the implications of his position, however, he does not attempt to justify it on evidential grounds, but considers it merely the most fruitful assumption on which to base a further study of the beginnings of art. He contrasts this attitude with the evolutionary theory,

whose proponents we have already discussed, which recognizes only the biological field of value, and the only motive of art the one of use, and which takes for granted that that use is magic or religious. If we must assume certain things in order to understand savages, says Vierkandt, the easiest and simplest assumption is their similarity to ourselves. Far from postulating only a biologic interest, we are then "authorized and obliged to expect true art and to look for an aesthetic value in the forms" of primitive art.⁷⁰ The postulate of an original aesthetic interest also changes the search for the origins of art: since there is no gradual unfolding of the forms of art we know out of previous, embryonic forms, as the evolutionists suppose, but rather the "sudden breaking-out of a new force," there can be no question of a real explanation of the new forms. All we can do is to describe the "prehistory of the arts," to look for "the general atmosphere in which the life of primitive art takes place, out of which it rises and into which it again falls." This can be the only "explanation" of the origins of art.⁷¹

This point of view is also adhered to by R. H. Lowie, who takes Wundt to task for his constant harping on the religio-magic factors entering into primitive art in spite of his assumption of the similarity of motives of primitive man and of ourselves. Lowie postulates the aesthetic impulse "as one of the irreducible components of the human mind, as a potent agency from the very beginnings of human existence."⁷² Moreover, Lowie goes so far as to emphasize the retro-active influence of art on religious and social customs, an influence which Grosse takes the trouble specifically to deny.⁷³

There remains only one final point of view upon primitive art to be recorded, one which is, indeed, the only remaining possible opinion. With those who may with justice be called the true champions of the primitives the wheel of taste takes its final turn and completes its full revolution. We have seen that others have classed the arts of the savages as among the best, because they found in them certain

general qualities which were excellent, but which were also to be found, perhaps in greater measure, in some period of more "civilized" art. The champions of primitive art saw in it unique characteristics which could be opposed with advantage to any subsequent evolution of style. It was an ideal from which most other art was a falling-away, and to which all other art was to be compared. The champions no longer defend, they eulogize. If there are any difficulties, they are those of explanation to an unenlightened or misguided public; they do not doubt that any one who has arrived at an understanding of the primitive will see it as they see it, and find in it all the virtues. Thus the first and most influential of the champions outside of purely ethnological circles, Carl Einstein, assumes that "the customary lack of understanding of Europeans of African art corresponds to its stylistic strength."⁷⁴ Our contempt is merely a reflection of our ignorance. Einstein goes on to explain that negro sculpture is the only true sculpture, the only sculpture that has dealt with and solved the fundamental problem of the art, that of the representation of cubic mass by direct methods. European sculpture is filled with the use of "painting surrogates," and the moderns seem to attempt the dissolution of the plastic. Even frontality, which has been regarded as a primitive solution of three-dimensional form, is "painterly," since the three dimensions are summed up in a few planes that suppress the cubic; so that even the beginnings of European sculpture in Greece are ruled out.⁷⁵ For Einstein those sculptors too, who, at the other end of the evolution of European art, have taken cognizance of primitive sculpture and have attempted a similar handling of fundamental problems, differ in an essential manner from its achievements: "what appears in the former as abstraction is in the latter nature rendered directly. Negro sculpture, in the formal sense, proves itself to be the strongest of realisms."⁷⁶ Like Boas, Einstein emphasizes the fact that African sculpture is not primitive; "it is anything, but not primitive, and under no circumstances constructive"; but there is this differ-

ence: Boas insists that primitive art is adult in relation to its own environment, Einstein that, in comparison to the arts of others, African art alone is fully adult.⁷⁷ For the former primitive art is comparable to other arts, for the latter it is better.

Roger Fry arrived at a similar estimate of African sculpture. He was influenced by the same rising artistic tradition as Einstein, and consequently saw the same elements in African sculpture: "I have to admit that some of these things are great sculpture—greater, I think, than anything we produced even in the middle ages. Certainly they have the special qualities of sculpture in a higher degree. . . . These African artists really conceive form in three dimensions."⁷⁸

Though his work prepared the way for many who came after him, both writers and aesthetes, Einstein's own publications are limited in extent. Extremely sceptical of the present state of ethnological information, he has been content to indicate what he considers the essence of primitive art, and has not attempted to write its history or to analyse in detail its various and badly defined provinces. The approach of von Sydow has been vastly different. In numerous lengthy works he has brought primitive art into relation with the motivating forces in its own culture, and has attempted to characterize it from the standpoint of the psychoanalytic determination of its forms.⁷⁹ Aesthetically, however, Sydow, like Einstein, is a champion of the "exotic primitive." He finds in sculpture a clear reflection of the general formal strength of the primitive, so that it gives a true image of the attitude to life of its makers. The three fundamental elements in the primitive world-view are: static unity, system, and aristocracy. "To these correspond in the aesthetic sphere: symmetrical unity of mass and surface, strong stylization, and emphasis on the surfaces."⁸⁰ From these comes the impression "that one indicates by the aesthetic category of *monumentality*."⁸¹ Though one may talk of "sublimity" in connection with certain works, Sydow reluctantly denies this appellation to primitive art as a whole. Elsewhere he describes primi-

tive man as "style-possessing," one for whom the aesthetic function is a rooted principle of life. This underlying character the civilized European can understand only as a sort of idyll. For him "style" is comprehensible only as a willed law, and so can be familiar only in a formal way.

"The modern impulses to reflective criticism and creative goals destroy the significant and force each one in an individual direction. The there-existing becomes for us principally a starting-point. But for the primitive the existing is as much goal as beginning. Since the aesthetic function depends on a representable stability of expression not on the dynamic changes of the impressed form, primitive man is the truly aesthetically educated being of our species."⁸²

Under the influence of the psychoanalytic viewpoint Sydow has somewhat qualified his opinion, restricting the achievement of primitive art to that of having attained the highest in its own field, "that of organic nature."⁸³ He is nevertheless to be counted among the strongest champions of the art of primitive peoples.

With Einstein and Sydow, the name of Niemeyer should also be mentioned. The author of only one important article, he none the less ranks in his activity with the champions of African art.⁸⁴

In the decade 1915-1925 the popular approval of primitive sculpture reached a high point. This approval had, indeed, in its uncritical appreciation of primitive production, gone beyond the ethnologists' considered appraisal. They had now in their turn, instead of pointing out the beauties of savage art, to warn against a complete abandonment of all critical standards, emphasizing at the same time that they valued the best creations of the native artist very highly. Einstein, a pioneer in the field as early as 1915, in a later book warns against the general romanticising of primitive life and art.⁸⁵ With the same intention Dr. J. Maes, whose activity at the Museum of the Congo and whose numerous articles count him among the chief students and advocates of primitive art, objects to the purely aesthetic attitude

toward African sculpture.⁸⁶ Characteristic of this attitude was the exhibition of negro art at the Antwerp Colonial Fair, which in order to establish "the title of absolute equality . . . apart from any racial consideration" of negro art, found it useful "resolutely to separate art from ethnology, in order to show only those examples with an absolute aesthetic interest."⁸⁷ Maes finds that this point of view, perhaps useful in exhibitions, cannot lead to a real understanding of primitive art, and that a systematic study cannot be separated from the idea which guided the artist.

"To wish to separate the object from its social significance, from its ethnic role, to see, admire, and look for the aesthetic side alone; is to remove from these specimens of negro art their sense, their significance, and the reason for their existence."⁸⁸

As the rest of the article from which this quotation is taken shows, Maes does not wish to deny to negro sculpture its artistic value; rather he thinks that its true beauty will only be appreciated if we understand its psychology. Only with this understanding will we be able to "penetrate all its beauty and all its life."⁸⁹

This division in the point of view of the champions of primitive art may finally be exemplified by two books on the sculpture of the primitive peoples which appeared in the same year. The one is *Primitive Negro Sculpture*, by Paul Guillaume and Thomas Munro; the other *Religioese Plastik der Naturvoelker*, by Ernst Vatter. In the first an "attempt is made to consider the plastic qualities of the figures—their effects of line, plane, mass and color—apart from all associated facts." The ethnological background is sketched in, but Guillaume and Munro are of the opinion that:

"There can be no doubt, however, that to bear such matters constantly in mind tends to confuse one's appreciation of the plastic qualities in themselves. From the artistic point of view the important question is not what subjects the sculptor chose, but how he executed them, with what distinctive uses of his medium."⁹⁰

Though the authors assert that their object "is not to prove that negro sculpture is or is not great," their high evaluation of it may be inferred from their thinking it susceptible to such purely formal and detailed analysis, and from the explanatory descriptions given throughout the book of the aesthetic effect of the objects themselves. Their classification, furthermore, of the work of Benin among the "minor traditions" of the African continent, clearly indicates that they value negro sculpture for those qualities of abstract, geometrical composition which it has in common with modern non-naturalistic art,⁹¹ and that they regard the significance of any art as being entirely divorced from its connotative content.

The kind of study that Vatter's book gives to primitive sculpture is indicated by its title. It is a study of the art in terms of its material and psychological background, and it discusses the various types of figures and masks in accordance with their social setting and their uses in religious and magic ceremonies before undertaking a relatively brief stylistic analysis. Vatter is interested in showing "the relations between the sculpture and the religion of primitive peoples in their dependence on the mental and cultural types . . ."⁹² His evaluation comes only at the end of an exhaustive study along these lines: after several centuries of denigration and destruction, European civilization is finally coming to an appreciation of non-European cultures. Today, when there is hardly anything left to destroy, we begin to doubt our own soulless civilization, and to realize "that we have lost what the primitive peoples, for so long despised, possessed to the highest degree: a world view which encloses mankind and the All in a deeply felt unity, which constitutes the essence of their religiousness, and has found form in their religious sculpture."⁹³ It will be seen that Vatter's opinion coincides with that of von Sydow which we have given above, a mixture of admiration for the qualities of the work produced by the primitives with a nostalgia for the supposedly simple and comforting psychological character of the savage

world, a world in which the conflicts of the individual with nature and with society were not yet realized.

The characterization of primitive art which we have just been considering, that of its champions, is clearly enough at the opposite pole from those descriptions of a half century before which we first took up. In contrast to an original neglect of primitive art, an attitude of which Tylor's work was typical, and the subsequent treatment of this art from the point of view of purely technical skill or mere externally motivated change, as with the Darwinists, primitive art is now one of the ethnologist's main concerns, and he considers it worthy of aesthetic attention and feels bound to give detailed formal analyses of its peculiar and varying artistic characters. He has, moreover, widened the field of his attention: Where formerly he confined his investigations almost entirely to the limited area of ornamental forms, seeking to analyze their various meanings, to find their origins, and to trace their evolution from naturalistic prototypes, as did the English followers of Semper; he has recently given much more of his interest to the independent arts, particularly to the dominant art of sculpture, searching for its different types, their interrelations, and their roots within primitive society. As has been remarked above, this change has not been due primarily to any change in the nature of the objects available, but rather to a shift in attention, caused by the gradual penetration of these objects within the visual ken of the ethnologist. It will have been noticed in the course of the account we have given that the field of attention has widened in geographical area as well; in the first studies examples of the art were drawn from Australia, Oceania, and South America, whereas recent descriptions lay more and more stress upon African examples. This is partly because of the relatively late exploration, conquest, and apportionment of the African continent, which delayed scientific work in the interior, but it is due also to the less descriptive and pictorial nature of African art, which made it harder for the assumptions of a naturalistic aesthetic to

grasp.⁹⁴ If in 1910 Torday and Joyce point out the portrait statues of the Bushongo as the “most beautiful works of African art” because of their realistic copying from nature, done with such care that the result is “greatly superior to what one might expect of a primitive people,” it is not surprising that three years later Tessmann all but ignored the statuary of the Fang, which is executed in a style far removed from any attempt to reproduce nature.⁹⁵ But by 1927 Rattray (an administrator) could realize that even “‘the uneducated masses’” of Ashanti possess a “love and appreciation of what is artistic and beautiful,” attributes which are not “the prerogative of all of us”; and point out that “there is hardly any object capable of artistic treatment which is not made the medium for some ornamental design which gives aesthetic delight to the African’s mind and eye.”⁹⁶ And in 1935 the British were trying to repair the damage they had done and to revive those arts which their political and economic penetration had destroyed.⁹⁷

The double broadening of geographic and artistic interest but points in the direction of the most striking change—that in aesthetic evaluation. This has been evident throughout our whole account, and we but mention it here once more in emphasis. While it is coincident with a change in ethnology as a whole away from the evolutionary point of view and towards the intensive study of primitive cultures as integral units, and as such is independent of any direct influence from modern art, it is clear that those whom we have called the champions of primitive art were influenced by the movement among the artists which took up and exploited the so-called “pure” and “basic” formal aspects of primitive sculpture. But these champions were for the most part not primarily ethnologists but art historians or amateurs of art who became interested in the primitive through the modern, and who later influenced the opinions of such ethnologists as Boas and Rattray. Our account has shown in addition that this was not a one-sided relationship. Even before the artists “discovered” Oceanic and African

art in 1904-5 the way was prepared within ethnology itself for the appreciation accorded primitive art by its ethnological champions, so that the artists were only adding fuel to a slow-burning fire; and, moreover, the ethnologists had, by the whole activity of their collecting and writing, set the stage for the artists' recognition of primitive art. This recognition is generally called a discovery, yet we have seen in the work of ethnologists a trend toward this discovery that was part of the same sort of revolt as that of the artists.⁹⁸ The romantic opinions of Owen Jones, the rejection of materialism by Riegl, Balfour's defense of "fanciful design," Andrée's protests against the underestimation of the savage's artistic ability, and Hamy's insistence upon the general possession of the artistic impulse are but undercurrents of a stream of taste which come to the surface at about the same time as the discovery of primitive art. In addition a certain number of the creations of primitive artists had been in museums and curiosity-shops for some time, where they were both evidence of a changing taste and one of the conditions of its still further change, on the part of the artists as well as the ethnologists. But to the artists they meant nothing until their "discovery" for the double reason that their own art was not ripe, and because a certain familiarity—doubtless an unconscious familiarity which would later be denied—was necessary before these things could exert an influence. The gathering of the objects of primitive art by the ethnologists was thus one of the necessary grounds without which the artists' enthusiasm and appreciation could not have occurred. They were part of a common, interdependent change in taste.

Notes:

The Evaluation of the Art of Primitive Peoples

¹ The art of Benin was found in quantity in the English raid on the city in 1897; isolated examples had been known since the sixteenth century. Cf. Luschan, Felix von, *Die*

Altertuemer von Benin (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1919), Introduction; and Heger, Franz, "Benin und seine Altertuemer," *Mittheilungen der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien*, XXIX (1899), Sitzungsberichte, 2-6. Further particular examples of all types of primitive art have of course been found since 1875.

² The classic statement of the assumptions which underlie this attitude is to be found in Gobineau, J. A., *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1853-55), Book I, Chap. XIV, Book II, Chap. VI. See also Leroy, Olivier, *La raison primitive* (Paris: Alcan, 1927), *passim*.

³ Tylor, Edward, *Primitive Culture. Researches into the development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art and Custom* (London: John Murray, 1871), p. 59.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

⁵ Lubbock, Sir John, *The Origin of Civilization* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1870), pp. 37-38.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 41-42. It is interesting that the basis of this judgment is the art of central and southern Africa, while there is no mention of West Africa, on which any modern opinion would rest. Neither is there any suggestion of the problem of the discrepancy between the realism of the Eskimos' carvings and the abstraction of their masks.

⁷ Oldfield, W., "On the Aborigines of Australia," *Transactions of the Ethnological Society of London*, III (1865), 227. "On being shown a colored engraving of an aboriginal New Hollander, one declared it to be a ship, another a kangaroo, and so on; not one of a dozen identifying the portrait as having any connection with himself. A rude drawing with all the lesser parts exaggerated they can realize."

⁸ Dawkins, William Boyd, *Early Man in Britain* (London: Macmillan, 1880), p. 305. Also p. 224, where the art of the Eskimos, alone among modern primitive art, is admired.

⁹ Semper, Gottfried, *Der Stil in den technischen und tektonischen Kuensten oder Praktische Aesthetik* (Munich: F. Bruckmann, 1861-63). For a brief outline of Semper's theories see, Prinzhorn, Hans, *Gottfried Semper's Aesthetische Grundanschauungen* (Munich: Thesis, 1908).

¹⁰ Semper, *op. cit.*, I, 5.

"Es treten dem aufmerksam Beobachter ueberall, wo er auf monumentale Spuren ersterbener Gellschaftsorganismen trifft, gewisse Grundformen oder Typen der Kunst entgegen, die sich hier klar und unverwischt, dort bereits in sekundaerer oder tertiaerer Umbildung und getruengt zeigen, immer aber als dieselben, die somit aelter sind als alle Gesellschaftsorganismen, von welchen sich Monumentale Spuren erhalten oder von denen wir sonst, in Beziehung auf ihnen eigen angehoerige Kunst, Nachricht haben. Diese typen sind verschiedensten Kuensten entlehnt, wie sie in primitivster Handhabung . . . gedacht wurden."

¹¹ *Ibid.*, II, 466.

¹² See Riegel, Alois, *Stilfragen* (Berlin: George Siemens, 1893), Introduction.

¹³ Conze, A. C. L. von, *Beitraege zur Geschichte der reichischen Plastik* (Halle: Waisenhaus, 1869).

¹⁴ Riegl, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-19.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. v-vii, 32.

¹⁶ Jones, Owen, *The Grammar of Ornament* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1868), pp. 15-16. Jones continues:

"The ornament of a savage tribe, being the result of a natural instinct, is necessarily always true to its purpose; whilst in much of the ornament in civilized nations, the first impulse which generated received forms being enfeebled by constant repetition, the ornament is oftentimes misapplied, and instead of first seeking the most convenient form, and adding beauty, all beauty is destroyed, because all fitness, by superadding ornament to ill-contrived form."

¹⁷ Schweinfurth, G. A., *Artes Africanæ* (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1875), Introduction.

¹⁸ Haddon, Alfred, *Evolution in Art* (London: W. Scott, 1895), p. 306.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 308.

²⁰ Haddon gives the credit of first carrying out such experiments, clearly borrowed from biological technique, to General Pitt-Rivers, founder of the Oxford Ethnological Museum. *Ibid.*, p. 311.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 317-318. The biological parallel is pushed to the extreme:

"... consciousness of purpose has extremely little to do with human evolution, nor has it much more to say in the evolution of patterns among primitive peoples."

²² Read, Charles, "On the Origin of Certain Ornaments of the South Eastern Pacific," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, XXI (1892), 139. March, Colley, "Evolution and Psychology in Art," *Mind*, V (1896), 441. Goodyear, W. H., "The Origin of the Acanthus Motive," *The American Architectural Record*, IV (1894), 88. Holmes, W. H., "The Origin and Development of Form and Ornament in Ceramic Art," *U. S. Ethnology Bureau Annual Report*, VI (1888), 189-252.

²³ March, *op. cit.*, p. 461.

²⁴ Balfour, Henry, *The Evolution of Decorative Art* (London: Percival & Co., 1893), p. 10. Balfour also differs with Haddon in his emphasis upon conscious, as well as unconscious, variation of design: *Ibid.*, p. 31:

"While the two processes may be associated . . . conscious variation is frequently to all intents and purposes the sole agent . . . there is no idea of slavishly adhering to the original in detail."

²⁵ Hamy, E. T., "La figure humaine chez le sauvage et chez l'enfant," *L'Anthropologie*, XIX (1908), 385-86.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 396. The general psychological comparison is in itself significant of the point of view.

²⁷ This parallel is more often drawn for the development of prehistoric art. See, Eng, Helga, *The Psychology of Children's Drawings* (N. Y.: Harcourt, Brace, 1931), pp. 213-14. For the point of view which holds that there is no parallel, see, Rouma, Georges, *Le langage graphique de l'enfant* (Paris: Alcan, 1913).

²⁸ Delafosse, Maurice, "Sur les traces probables de civilisation égyptienne et d'hommes de race blanche à la Côte d'Ivoire," *L'Anthropologie*, XI (1900), 431-451, 543-68, 677-90.

²⁹ Wilson, Elizabeth, *Das Ornament* (Erfurt: J. G. Cramer, 1914), p. 12.

- ³⁰ Hein, A. R., *Macander, Kreuze, Hakenkreuze und Urmotivische Wirbelornamente in Amerika* (Vienna: A. Hoelder, 1891), p. 3:
 "Fuer Untersuchungen, welche auf solchem Boden haetten gefuehrt werden muessen, fehlte den Ethnologen zunaechst das Auge; den Kuenstlern und Kunstgelehrten aber in gleichen Masse Interesse und Verstaendnis."
- ³¹ Hein, A. R., *Die bildenden Kuenste bei den Dayaks auf Borneo* (Vienna: A. Hoelder, 1890), p. 3.
- ³² *Ibid.*, p. 90. For Hein's theories of ornament, and that of others, see, Heydrich, Martin, "Afrikanische Ornamentik. Beitrage zur Erforschung der primitiven Ornamentik und zur Geschichte der Forschung," *Internationales Archiv fuer Ethnographie*, XXII (1914), supplement. Also, Wilson, *op. cit.*
- ³³ Stolpe, Hjalmar, "On Evolution in the Ornamental Art of Savage Peoples," *Collected Essays in Ornamental Art*. Translated by March, Mrs. C. H., (Stockholm: Aftonbladet, 1927), pp. 56-57. (First published in 1890-91.) That stylization is not due to lack of ability may be seen from, *Ibid.*, p. 56:
 "Nor were the transformations due to any want of skill on the part of the Herveyan carver, because he often used to place on the very same implements the realistic prototype, as well as a whole series of intermediate forms, down to those that are most transfigured."
- ³⁴ Stolpe, Hjalmar, "Studies in American Ornamentation," *Collected Essays in Ornamental Art*. Translated by March, Mrs. C. H. (Stockholm: Aftonbladet, 1927), p. 69. (First published in 1896.)
- ³⁵ Steinen, Karl von den, *Unter den Naturvoelkern Zentral-Braziliens* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1894), pp. 243-94.
- ³⁶ Koch-Gruenberg, Theodor, *Anfaenge der Kunst im Urwald* (Berlin: E. Wasmuth, 1906), p. 1. Also by the same author, *Suedamerikanische Felszeichnungen* (Berlin: E. Wasmuth, 1907), Chap. III; in which he takes exception to the current theory that these rock drawings are a kind of picture-writing, done without any aesthetic interest.
- ³⁷ Andree, Richard, "Das Zeichnen bei den Naturvoelkern," *Mittheilungen der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien*, XVII (1887), 98:
 "Das Talent, schnell charakteristische Zeichnungen zu entwerfen, ist unter den Naturvoelkern viel weiter verbreitet, als man gewoehnlich annimmt, und bei den Meisten braucht nur eine Gelegenheit gegeben zu werden, um die schlummernde Gabe zu wecken."
- ³⁸ Tessmann, Guenter, *Die Pangwe* (Berlin: E. Wasmuth, 1913), p. 275.
- ³⁹ Stephan, Emil, *Sudseekunst. Beitrage zur Kunst des Bismark-Archipels, und zur Urgeschichte der Kunst ueberhaupt* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1907), p. 81:
 "Eine weitere Schwierigkeit, aufklaeren, ob wir es mit woertlichen oder mit uebertragenen Bedeutungen zu tun haben, liegt darin, dass es uns an einem objektiven Massstabe fuer die Begriffe 'Naturtreue' und 'Stilisierung' fehlt. . . . Die Entscheidung darueber haengt durchaus von der Persoenlichkeit des Beschauers ab."
- Stephan does not agree with the "technical" theories of ornament, nor with its derivation from clanmarks, owner's-marks, or picture-writing. See, *Ibid.*, pp. 63-66.
- ⁴⁰ Verworn, Max, *Zur Psychologie der primitiven Kunst* (Jena: G. Fischer, 1907), pp. 5-6:

"Die Kunstpsychologie bestand fast ausschliesslich in der traditionellen Aesthetik. Den Mittelpunkt aller psychologischen Kunstbetrachtungen bildete immer und immerwieder allein der Schoenheitsbegriff der Kulturvoelker. . . . In Wirklichkeit ist das Gebiet unendlich viel groesser."

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 16-20. Verworn says that children's art, and that of contemporary primitives, reverses the biogenetic law, found in palaeolithic cave painting; see, Eng, *loc. cit.* He believes that art comes from play by way of technique; see, *Die Anfaenge der Kunst* (Jena: G. Fischer, 1909), pp. 16-19.

⁴² Grosse, Ernst, *The Beginnings of Art* (London: Appleton, 1897), p. 23. Interesting in relation to the thesis of this chapter is a modern marginal comment on Grosse's assertion that because the designs on Australian weapons are marks of ownership "they have, therefore, not an aesthetic, but a practical significance." The modern note says, "This has not great significance, even if they be marks of ownership, they are aesthetic expressions." Grosse is careful to distinguish between non-aesthetic decoration, and representative art for which, "with comparatively few exceptions, neither a religious nor any other outside purpose can be proved to be intended. . . ." *Ibid.*, p. 204.

⁴³ Hirn, Yrjo, *The Origins of Art* (London: Macmillan, 1900), p. 143.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 27, 147. Hirn's book is described by Wilson (*op. cit.*, p. 17) as "ein verwaesserter Darwinismus, zur Aufdeckung 'der Ursprunge' angewandt." Hirn's agreement (*op. cit.*, p. 34) with Marshall's definition of pleasure and pain seems to justify the epithet.

⁴⁵ Grosse, *op. cit.*, pp. 193, 24, 165, where he takes exception with Oldfield.

⁴⁶ Durkheim, Emile, *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (Paris: Alcan, 1912); Reinach, Salomon, *Cultes, mythes, et religions* (5 vols.; Paris: E. Leroux, 1905-23); Guyau, J. M., *L'Art au point de vue sociologique* (Paris: Alcan, 1887).

⁴⁷ See above, p. 16.

⁴⁸ Riegl, *op. cit.*, p. vi:

"Die Eile, mit der man jeweilig sofort versicherte, dass man ja nicht so ungebildet und naiv waere zu glauben, dass etwa ein Volk dem anderen ein 'einfaches' Maenderband abgeguckt haben koennte, und die Entschuldigung, um die man vielmals bat, wenn man sich herausnahm, etwa ein planimetrisch stilisiertes Pflanzenmotiv mit einem aehnlichen aus fremden Kunstbesitz in entfernte Verbindung zu bringen, lehren deutlich genug, welch' siegreichen Terrorismus jene Extremen auch auf die 'Historiker' unter den mit der Ornamentforschung Beflissenen ausuebten."

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3:

"Die geometrischen Kunstformen verhalten sich eben zu den uebrigen Kunstformen genau so wie die gesetze der Mathematik zu den lebendigen Naturgesetzen."

Compare this with the primitivism of certain abstractionist theories, considered below, Chap. V.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 32:

"Die ganze Theorie erscheint hiernach bloss als Glied der materialistischen Weltanschauung, bestimmt die Ableitung einer geistigen Lebensaeusserungen des Menschen aus stofflich-materiellen Praemissen, um einen Schritt weiter hinauf zu ruecken. Wir wollen diesen Schritt gar nicht thun, um schliesslich eingestehen zu muessen, das wir des Pudels Kern doch nicht zu erkennen vermoegen."

- ⁵¹ Schlosser, Julius von, "Alois Riegl," *Corona*, IV (1933), 214. "... etwas von einem 'rueckwaertsgewandten Propheten'..."
- ⁵² Woelfflin, Heinrich, *Die Bamberger Apokalypse* (Munich: Koeniglich Bayerischen Akademie, 1918), p. 2.
- ⁵³ Worringer, Wilhelm, *Abstraktion und Einfuehlung* (Munich: R. Piper, 1907); *Formprobleme der Gotik* (Munich: R. Piper, 1912) Translated as, *Form in Gothic* (London: Putnam, 1927); *Griechentum und Gotik* (Munich: R. Piper, 1928).
- ⁵⁴ Worringer, *Form in Gothic*, Chap. IV.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 180-81. "For the Germans in the 'widest sense,' as we have seen, are the *conditio sine qua non* of Gothic." The correlation of race and primitive art (other than simple endowment, or lack of it) goes back to ca. 1890, a connection being made between certain fundamental forms (e.g. the swastika) and the Indo-germanic stem. See, Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 11. For ideas similar to Worringer, also see, Adama Van Scheltema, *Die Altnordische Kunst* (Berlin: Mauritius, 1923), p. 248.
- ⁵⁶ Frobenius, Leo, *Paideuma* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1921), pp. 94-96. Frobenius has been an agitator for the return of the German colonies.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 92:
 "Der Morgenlaender lebt in einer Welthoehle. Ein Aussen kennt er nicht. . . . Der Abendlaender dagegen lebt in einem Haus. Dem entspricht ein Innengefuehl und erst hieraus konnte sich ein Aussengefuehl entwickeln. Dieses Aussen ist ein Uendlichkeitsraum."
- ⁵⁸ Frobenius, Leo, *Das Unbekannte Afrika* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1923), p. 4:
 "Als das Merkwuerdigste an diesen Afrika erscheint mir immer wieder, dass sein Inneres uns so verwandt ist. . . . In dem durch Eklektismus ausgezeichneten Kulturstadium, in dem wir uns befinden, nimmt Afrika eine ganz eigenartige Stellung ein."
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 140. The reference here seems to be to modern African primitive art. But see also his, *Madsimu-Dsangara* (Berlin: Atlantis, 1931), Vol. I, *passim*; where the same critique is given of the Rhodesian "prehistoric" or "Bushman" painting. These tendencies do not appear in Frobenius' early work such as, "Die Masken und Geheimbuender Afrikas," *Abhandlungen der Kaiserlichen Leopoldin-Carolinische Deutscher Akademie*, LXXIV (1899), 1 ff.; or, "Die Bildende Kunst der Afrikaner," *Mittheilungen der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien*, XXVII (1897), 1 ff. But see his, *Kulturgeschichte Afrikas* (Zurich: Phaidon, 1933), for a further exaggeration.
- ⁶⁰ Kuehn, Herbert, *Die Kunst der Primitiven* (Munich: Delphin Verlag, 1923), pp. 11-12.
- ⁶¹ Kuehn, Herbert, "Praehistorische und Ethnographische Kunst," *Ipek*, I (1925), 3, 11.
- ⁶² Kuehn, *Die Kunst* . . . , p. 22.
- ⁶³ Breuil, Abbé, "Les origines de l'art décoratif," *Journal de Psychologie*, XXIII (1926), 366.
- ⁶⁴ Luquet, G. H., *The Art and Religion of Fossil Man*. (Translated by Russell, G. T. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930), p. 111. (First appeared in 1926.)
- ⁶⁵ *Loc. cit.*
- ⁶⁶ *Loc. cit.* See also by Luquet, "Les origines de l'art figuré," *Ipek*, II (1926), 1-28.
- ⁶⁷ Boas, Franz, *Primitive Art* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1927), p. 9.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 13. Boas has not formulated his views in an entirely consistent manner; compare his agreement with Riegl with the following (*Ibid.*, p. 10):

"What then gives to the sensation aesthetic value? When the treatment has attained a certain standard of excellence, when the control of the processes involved is such that certain typical forms are produced, we call the process an art, . . ."

There is some confusion between the priority (or the collaboration) of "idea" and "technique."

⁷⁰ Vierkandt, Alfred, "Prinzipienfragen der ethnologischen Kunstforschung," *Zeitschrift fuer Aesthetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, XIX (1925), 342.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 344. Vierkandt's *Vom Wesen der Volkskunst* (Berlin, 1926), was not available.

⁷² Lowie, R. H., "Religion and Art," *Primitive Religion* (London: George Routledge, 1925), p. 260.

⁷³ Grosse, *op. cit.*, pp. 205-6.

⁷⁴ Einstein, Carl, *Negerplastik* (2nd ed.; Munich: Kurt Wolff, 1920), p. ix.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. ix-xii.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. xi:

"Ueblicher Weise bezeichnet man die Bemuehungen dieser Maler als Abstraktion, wiewohl sich nicht leugnen laesst, dass nur mit einer ungeheueren Kritik der verirrten Umschreibungen man sich einer unmittelbaren Raumauffassung naechern konnte. Dies jedoch ist wesentlich und scheidet die Negerplastik kraeftig von solcher Kunst, die an ihr sich orientierte und ihr Bewusstsein gewann; was hier als Abstraktion erscheint ist dort unmittelbar gegebene Natur."

⁷⁷ Einstein, Carl, *Afrikanische Plastik* (Berlin: E. Wasmuth, 1922), p. 6.

⁷⁸ Fry, Roger, "Negro Sculpture," *Vision and Design* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1928), p. 100. (First published, 1920.)

⁷⁹ Sydow, Eckart von, *Primitive Kunst und Psychoanalyse* (Vienna: Psychoanalytische-Verlag, 1927).

⁸⁰ Sydow, Eckart von, *Kunst und Religion der Naturvoelker* (Oldenburg i. O.: G. Stalling, 1926), p. 21:

"Die Grundsaeetze der Primitiven Kunstuebung praegen sich am reinsten in der Skulptur aus. Sie geben ein deutliches Spiegelbild der allgemeinen Formkraefte der Primitivitaet, so dass sie ein getreues Abbild der Lebenshaltung ihrer Traeger sind. Drei Elemente hatten wir als grundlegend gefunden: statische Einheitlichkeit—Systematik—Aristokratismus."

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁸² Sydow, Eckart von, *Ahnenkult und Ahnenbild der Naturvoelker* (Berlin: Furche, 1926), p. 9.

⁸³ Sydow, *Primitive Kunst* . . . , p. 169.

⁸⁴ Niemeyer, W., "Vom Wesen afrikanischen Plastik," *Die Kuendung (Hamburger Zeitschrift)*, III (1921). This publication was not available for reference.

⁸⁵ Einstein, *Afrikanische Plastik*, p. 5:

"Mit Vorsicht moege man afrikanische Historie rekonstruieren; denn leicht geraet man ins Idealisieren und laesst sich von den modischen Vorstellungen einer romantischen Primitiven betaeuben."

- ⁸⁶ For Maes' numerous articles see, *Bibliographie Ethnographique du Congo Belge et des Régions avoisinantes* (Brussels: Musée du Congo Belge, 1932-33).
- ⁸⁷ Quoted by Maes in, "La psychologie de l'art nègre," *Ipek*, II (1926), 275.
- ⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 283.
- ⁸⁹ *Loc. cit.*:
 "Efforçons nous au contraire de comprendre la psychologie de l'art nègre et nous finirons par en pénétrer toute la beauté et toute la vie! N'oublions point, l'art nègre ne peut avoir toute sa signification pour celui qui ignore la pensée et l'âme de son auteur."
- ⁹⁰ Guillaume, P. and T. Munro, *Primitive Negro Sculpture* (N. Y.: Harcourt, Brace, 1926), p. 7.
- ⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 122. Cf. Einstein, *Afrikanische Plastik*, p. 9; where much the same evaluation is given. The Benin tradition is of great historical importance in its influence upon the other regions of West Africa.
- ⁹² Vatter, Ernst, *Religiose Plastik der Naturvoelker* (Frankfurt a/M.: Frankfurter-Verlag, 1926), p. 5.
- ⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 172:
 "Unter Berufung auf Primitivitaet, Unkultur und Fetischismus als wesentliche Merkmale der Lebensgestaltung jener nicht-europaeischen Voelkermasse, die wir als Naturvoelker bezeichnen, hat die europaeische Zivilisation, manchmal aus bestem Willem heraus, seit Jahrhunderten einen systematischen Vernichtungskrieg gegen alte, urtuemliche und in sich gefestigte Kulturen eigener Art gefuehrt. Heute, nachdem kaum noch etwas zu zerstoeren uebrig geblieben ist, da wir beginnen, am inneren Wert unserer seelenlosen Zivilisation irre zu werden, wurde uns mehr und mehr bewusst dass wir das verloren haben, was den so lange verachteten Naturvoelkern in hohem Masse eigen ist; ein den Menschen und das All zu einer tief empfundenen Einheit umschliessendes Weltgefuehl, welches das Wesen ihrer Religiositaet ausmacht und in ihrer religioesen Plastik kuenstlerische Form gewonnen hat."
- ⁹⁴ For the main dates of discovery and settlement, see above, Chap. I, Part I.
- ⁹⁵ Torday, F., and T. A. Joyce, "Les Bushongo," *Annales du Musée du Congo Belge*, sér. 3 (1910), tome 2, fasc. 1, p. 204. Tessmann, *loc. cit.*
- ⁹⁶ Rattray, R. S., *Religion and Art in Ashanti* (Oxford: University Press, 1927), p. 269. The more recent favor accorded the even more highly stylised, but more decorative art of the Sudan (Bambara, Dogo), may also be correlated with a further change in the problems of modern painting.
- ⁹⁷ Sadler, M. E. (Editor), *Arts of West Africa* (Oxford: University Press, 1935), *passim*. This is of course not a unique attempt to undo the effects of civilisation upon primitive culture. Cf. the current surprisingly successful effort of the United States Government to revive the arts of the American Indian.
- ⁹⁸ For the dates of this discovery, see below, Chap. III.

CHAPTER II

THE PREPARATION

PRIMITIVISM presupposes the primitive, and an artistic primitivism assumes the knowledge of and an interest in arts that are in some sense considered primitive. But such an interest, in so far as it takes for granted a curiosity about styles other than one's own and an ability to appreciate and make use of their particular aesthetic contributions, is in itself the issue of a more general orientation which the artist shares with others, that of an historical consciousness which finds stimulating the cultural manifestations of the past. The account of our first chapter has shown that the scientific interest in the exotic arts, which began as an interest in origins and demonstrable evolution, was simply the geographical transplantation of such an historical orientation, replacing the temporally distant by the spatially removed, and assuming a lack of change among the "retarded" peoples which made it possible to identify what was still preserved among them with what had been lost in a more rapid evolution elsewhere. Likewise within the field of art itself the primitivism of the twentieth century—however far it may later outrun its start, and we shall see how far this is—develops from the artistic historicism of the preceding century. Looked at from one point of view, the interest in primitive art is but the latest of a series of such interests in the distant arts which goes back to the *Chinoiserie* of the eighteenth century, and includes Persia, Egypt, and Japan, besides various periods of the art of Greece and Rome.¹

The exoticism of the first half of the nineteenth century is concentrated upon Mohammedan civilization in both the Near East and

North Africa. At first such exotic elements, which derive from the immediate environment rather than from the arts, are used as a kind of *décor*, a setting within which a scene may be put in order to lend it episodic or dramatic value.² Different as they are formally, and in spite of an avowed opposition of intention, the treatments of "oriental" subjects by Ingres and Delacroix have in common a disregard for exactitude, a primary interest in the exotic as exotic rather than as documentation, as something worthy of attention because of its difference from the ordinary. They share a conception of an "arbitrary picturesque" which enables Delacroix to vary with impunity the Algerian scenes he paints several years after he gets home from Africa, and which dominates the lesser work of Decamps and Champmartin in spite of their journeys to the Near East.³ But about 1830 a new, more scientific interest begins to come into play, a curiosity which desires to reproduce in correct detail all the aspects of oriental costume and architecture. Gros had already displayed a somewhat similar attitude in his studies from books for his Jaffa hospital and in his copies from Persian miniatures; the work of Orsel among the Egyptian antiquities of the Louvre, and the journeys of Gleyre to Egypt in the thirties, and of Marilhat to Greece and Fromentin to Africa in the forties give it a new archaeological impetus.⁴

The intention of these journeys, as they are carried on by Horace Vernet and Holman Hunt also includes a primitivist element. Both Hunt's voyage to the Dead Sea and Vernet's trips to North Africa with the French army have the purpose of a correct religious documentation; and though they are perhaps not equally serious in the manner in which they employ their finds, both artists wish to render accurately an earlier and more authentic religious atmosphere through the use of existing details which they conceive as still properly preserving it.⁵ For this reason Hunt gives us an exact transcription of the shore of the Dead Sea in his *Scapegoat* (1856), and Vernet, in such pictures as *Rebecca at the Fountain* (1835) and *Abraham and Agar*

(1837) replaces the conventional Biblical costumes with contemporary Arabic clothes, using them as Orsel had previously used his Egyptian documents. The practice in each case aroused excitement and indignation, but neither in England nor in France did it have much following.

Scandalous as these attempts seemed at the time, they were but new manifestations of a combined historical and religious spirit which had existed for some time, and which was certainly no less open to criticism in its use of other historical styles as means to the same end and in the supposition that through them an originally "true" and purer spirit had been caught. Historicism, and particularly the painting of medieval subjects goes well back towards the middle of the eighteenth century in the work of West, Copley, and Menageot, but these painters are still classicist in style, using subjects deriving from a national tradition but only occasionally attempting any contemporaneity of representation.⁶ The most primitivist manifestation of historicism occurs among that sect known as the "*Barbus*" which arose in the atelier of David about 1800, and of which we have extensive accounts but apparently only one preserved picture.⁷ These young men, of whom the leader was a certain Maurice Quai, wished to go back beyond the classical Greek origins of their teacher, for whom in turn the Roman style of his master Vien and his own early works had become not "original" enough, to something that was "simpler, grander, more primitive."⁸ They dressed in what they imagined to be pre-Periclean Greek costumes, admired Ossian even more than Homer, and derived their style from the newly discovered "Etruscan" vase paintings, trying to copy, as we can tell from Ingres' *Wounded Venus* (1802), their linear design and flat relief stylization of form. They had an admiration of the primitive just because it was the primitive that cannot be matched again before the twentieth century, even though their art, in the clarity and grace which are its

obvious ideals, is essentially archaist, rather than primitivist in its feeling.⁹

Somewhat later Ingres shifted his admiration to primitives of an entirely different sort, those of the fifteenth century in Italy, and this use of the word, common in the nineteenth century, still persists today even though the conception of style behind it has entirely changed.¹⁰ The other, more religious movements which derived their inspiration from the *Quattrocento*, were also, in so far as they sought to refine and purify their style through an imitation of an earlier style, abandoning later technical inventions and formal complications, rather archaist in intention: for them this was a severe and noble style. But this severity and nobility lay also in the power which these later artists thought inherent in it to express a simpler, and earlier, and therefore truer religious sentiment. It was this latter emphasis which made it possible for the Pre-Raphaelites to combine their admiration of the early Italians with a professed wish to paint realistically, and to claim that in so doing they were following the precedent of their forerunners. We shall see that the belief of Nazarenes and Pre-Raphaelites that in going back toward the *origins* of religious and artistic developments they were proceeding toward a more essential core is analogous to later beliefs of the primitivism of the twentieth century, particularly those of Gauguin and of Emil Nolde. But inasmuch as the sentiments thus uncovered and consequently their formal expressions were found to be sweet, charming, and reasonable, to contain slight shadings and delicate nuances, they differ from these later attitudes.¹¹ As the *Quattrocento* is appreciated not as a really *prime* epoch, but simply as one preceding a period of over-development, so their intention includes neither the extreme formal simplicity nor the immediate emotional intensity of a later primitivism.

The style of the turn of the century which in Germany was given the accidentally appropriate name of *Jugendstil* and whose parallel French manifestations were known as *art nouveau* marks a new stage

in the preparation for later primitivism.¹² Lacking any influence from aboriginal art, this style nevertheless foreshadows certain later primitivist tendencies of abstract art in its attitude toward decorative motives, and in its use of subject-matter exerts an influence on those German artists of "expressionism" who had in the meantime come to know the styles of Africa and Oceania. In his book of 1907, which may be considered as embodying the principles of *art nouveau*, Van de Velde, its chief architectural exponent, tries to find an abstract aesthetic basis upon which all of the new art may be built, thus freeing it from the purely constructive origin it hitherto had had and which demeaned it, and also establishing a further bond for the axiomatic unification of all the arts.¹³ This basis Van de Velde finds in the screw, from which he thinks all ornament can be elaborated, since he cannot conceive of any particular ornamental motive "whose life and logic one cannot derive from the screw." Such a search for one simple, underlying form upon which an art can be based is itself indicative of a primitivist tendency which we will meet again; but the derivation of the decorative designs of *art nouveau* from simple kinds of animal and plant life is further evidence of this special orientation. The plant forms in which Van de Velde found comfort are well exhibited in the details of his Folkwang Museum; while the stylizations of simple animals particularly polyps and jelly-fish which most often furnish the motives for their decorations have perhaps their best known example in the façade of August Endell's House Elvira in Munich, whose ornament might be one gigantic sea-animal.¹⁴ Apparently the discovery of Mycenaean art with its polyp and snake-like decoration of vases, which had been published by Furtwaengler in 1886, had a direct influence on the formation of this style; but more than this the use of such forms had, as has been remarked, a deliberate primitivistic intent:¹⁵ It was a method of conscious reaction against the over-refinement of impressionism, a search "in these primitive forms, for the 'ornamental fearfulness' of nature.

One wanted to seize life at its lowest levels, at its origins.”¹⁶ As such it is comparable to later similar attempts inspired by the art of aboriginal peoples.

We cannot here go into the more architectural instances of this desire, whether they remain rather abstract in character as in the work of Van de Velde himself and the Paris *Métropolitain* stations with their ironwork tracery of Guimard, or whether they take on a more symbolic character as in Gaudí’s Casa Mila in Barcelona; nor can we detail its many expressions in the applied and minor arts. But it will be well to mention some paintings which belong to the *Jugendstil* in its larger sense and in which the primitivist use of ornamental forms is obvious. Perhaps most evident is Munch’s *Madonna* (1895) surrounded by an ornamental-symbolic border made up of an embryo and of swimming spermatozoa, but it is also proper to include the *Cry* (1893) where a swirling arabesque of line is meant to be not only the carrier of the sound but the embodiment of the essence of the cry itself. The symbolic dream-forms of Redon, his combinations of flowers and faces in his water colors, and his use of both flower and animal forms in his lithographs, particularly the series with the significant name of *Les Origines* (1883), have much the same intent; and the pen designs of Beardsley, although used in a supposedly ultra-sophisticated fashion, often have the same origins and the same reference.¹⁷ Even Van Gogh’s desire to “express the love of two lovers by a marriage of two complementary colors,” if we view it in the light of his approval of Gauguin’s wish to paint “like children” and his advice to the impressionists “to learn a little to be primitives as *men* before pronouncing the word primitive as a title”; and of his despair at civilization’s spoiling of the simple and lovable nature of savages, and his admiration of the simplicity of the ancient Mexican and Egyptian houses, is a part of this same primitivist tendency.¹⁸

These descriptions have already indicated the other aspect of this

trend, the desire to present as subject-matter the basic emotional situations of life, visualising them as violent and irrepressible, and depicting each one as a symbol representing the "realities" of life. Munch's subjects—*The Dead Mother*, *Jealousy*, *The Dance of Life*, *The Vampire*, *Urns*—which are paralleled by those of Klimt and Redon, and the satirical mask scenes of Ensor (e.g. *Death and the Masks*, *The Assassination*) have this end in view. (Figs. 3, 4.) It has been said of Munch's art of this period of the nineties that "its content is life itself," and it is this wishful immediacy, the conscious sense that it is fundamentals which are being conveyed that constitutes the primitivistic element of these pictures. Mixed with a sentimentalism that is also evident in Van Gogh, and that is much stronger in Klimt and Beardsley, is the feeling that these are lower, underlying realities which the painter, by casting off the surface is showing bravely and directly. In line with this attitude and with the opposition to impressionism that it implies, the compositions are presented in a broad fashion, there is little bother with delicacy of line or close harmony of color; rather simple linear complements are used and the colors are in evident and striking contrast to each other. The compositions are not meant to bear detailed analysis, but an immediate and startling effect of the whole as a unit is intended in order that the "fearfulness" may be conveyed the better. In Munch's work the symbolic atmosphere given partly by the ornamental signs that have been mentioned, is increased by the exaggeration of perspective as in *The Cry*, or by the repression of the enclosing space as in the *Dance of Life* (Fig. 3), the purpose in either case being to create the feeling of a tremendous pressure of outside forces at the particular spot shown in the picture, forces which are ominous but cannot be withstood.¹⁹ Thus by showing only the head of the man in *Jealousy* the space is continued beyond the frame of the canvas, and by his direct look is borne immediately in upon the spectator. In *The Kiss* this tone places the couple tightly in one corner of the canvas, while the child in *The Dead Mother* as in

The Cry stares straight out with round, frightened eyes. Something of the same spirit, though more lightly expressed, is to be found in the work of Klimt; and the symbolism of Ensor's masks as a half-humorous way of showing the really terrible state of the underlying strata of the mind need not be labored. Redon's dream subjects (later made use of by the surrealists) tend in the same direction, although theirs is much more the effect of simple wonder at a mystery.

Hodler's primitivism is of more varied and complicated character. Even before he was influenced by Ph. O. Runge and his interest in communion with nature and the innocent child as the symbol of its achievement (*Boy with Flower* (1893), *The Chosen One* (1893/4)), and by the religious group of the *Rose-Croix*, whom he knew in Paris, he had found an archaizing if not a primitivizing retreat into nature (*Intimate Dialogue with Nature* (1884)) which in its tenderness is at the opposite pole from other aspects of his art.²⁰ At the same time he shows his affinity with the ornamental side of *art nouveau*, and particularly that of the synthetists, who were also influenced by the *Rose-Croix*, in his symbolic use of flat decorative surface and simplified, rhythmic arabesque (*The Night* (1890), *The Disillusioned* (1891/2), *The Day* (1900)). But throughout his work there is at times a curious combination of this decorative style with a eulogy of brute force as it is embodied in the peasant (*The Courageous Woman* (1886), *The Woodsman* (1910)), which in his later paintings is cast in the form of an historical romanticism (*William Tell* (1903), *Marignan* (1912)).

Something of the same liking for the simplicity of the peasant as such, but with a Rousseauesque leaning, is characteristic of Van Gogh. He admires Millet for his creation of the "type," and wishes his own art to contain "something more concise, more simple, more serious," which would have "more soul, more love, and more heart," and would be "true" like the work of Millet and of Israels.²¹ This latter sort of primitivism we will find again in Gauguin, part of whose

style, in its "deformations" and its decorative character, is properly *art nouveau* (as witness its transformation into the related style of Symbolism); while both the psychological and technical qualities of Munch's work (perhaps best expressed in his use of the lithograph) contribute to the influences making for the primitivism of the *Brücke*.²² These styles we will examine presently; here we may once again remark that the primitivist qualities we have been engaged in describing antedate any knowledge of aboriginal art. Because of this, and because of their mystical orientation, they have a bearing upon our interpretation of the later stages of primitivism, which again breaks away from the direct influence of the primitive and tries to attribute to itself an absolute character.

Notes:

The Preparation

¹ The influence of Japanese prints specifically should be mentioned, and the fact that only a late, somewhat broad and coarse style was known at first. Would the influence have been as great had the contact come through the earlier style?

² Rosenthal Léon, *Du romantisme au réalisme* (Paris: Laurens, 1914), p. 82. The change is accompanied by numerous archaeological publications.

³ Champmartin had been to Constantinople; Decamps in Asia Minor. Cf. also the *Orientales* of Victor Hugo. Rosenthal, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

⁴ Rosenthal, *op. cit.*, p. 294. The tendency is continued by such minor artists as Dauzats and Flandin. The Egyptian work of Gleyre has been destroyed.

⁵ Hunt's first voyage to the east was in 1854. But in the seventies he made two different trips to Jerusalem and established a studio there.

⁶ Locquin, Jean, *La peinture d'histoire en France de 1747 à 1785* (Paris: Laurens, 1912), *passim*. Medievalism later becomes part of the romantic repertory, using it in much the same way as it uses the orient, the variations depending upon the painter.

⁷ Friedlaender, Walter, "Eine Sekte der 'Primitiven' um 1800 in Frankreich und die Wandlung des Klassizismus bei Ingres," *Kunst und Kuenstler*, XXIX (1930), 320.

⁸ Delécluze, E. J., *Louis David, son école et son temps* (Paris: Didier, 1865), p. 428.

⁹ But note the comparison drawn by Delécluze, *op. cit.*, p. 434, between the situation in 1799 and that in 1832 when the older admirations have been replaced by Dante,

the primitives by the naïve, Paestum by Cologne, vase paintings by the "première école allemande," Ossian by the English and Scotch ballads.

¹⁰ For a discussion of this change see Friedlaender, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

¹¹ The attitude of the German Romantics should also be included in this conception, although their work has in it more of a naïve mysticism.

¹² The whole analysis of this section is obviously indebted to the article of Michalski, Ernst, "Die Entwicklungsgeschichtliche Bedeutung des Jugendstils," *Repertorium fuer Kunstwissenschaft*, XLVI (1925), 133-49; the inclusion of Redon and Ensor, not to be found there, is justified by the particular slant of this analysis.

¹³ Van de Velde, *Vom neuen Stil*; quoted by Michalski, *op. cit.*, p. 139; the further quotation also from here.

¹⁴ Note particularly the details of the large skylight, of the stair railing, and the door lintels. In the applied arts the clearest example is that of Tiffany glass.

¹⁵ Michalski, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

¹⁷ It is interesting to note the titles of some of this series: "Le polype difforme flottait sur les rivages," "Il y a peut-être une vision première essayée dans la fleur." The frontispiece shows a marked similarity to the work of Ensor, while the handling of parts of the "Temptation of St. Anthony" (1888) is like that of Munch or Gauguin in the way in which forms trail off into abstract, symbolic line.

¹⁸ *The Letters of Vincent Van Gogh to His Brother 1872-1886* (3 vols.; London: Constable, 1927, 1929), III, 139, 166, 353. Note also (III, 201 and elsewhere) Van Gogh's admiration for Japanese prints. Also *Lettres de Vincent Van Gogh à Emile Bernard* (Paris: Ambroise Vollard, 1911), pp. 83, 142: "Et ces sauvages étaient si doux et si amoureux!"

¹⁹ Munch derives his use of perspective from the practice of the early impressionists, as his work in Paris shows; but in the work of this period he changes their diagonal into an almost direct recession from the picture plane, since his work becomes frontal. The parallel between the atmosphere of Munch's work and that of his contemporary Ibsen can of course not be missed.

²⁰ The *Salon de la Rose-Croix* was held in 1892 at Durand-Ruel.

²¹ Van Gogh, *op. cit.*, II, 3, 50, 62, 92.

²² It is significant for this influence and its evolution that with the *Brücke* the lithograph should have been replaced by the much broader medium of the wood-cut and the linoleum-cut. See below, Chapter IV.

CHAPTER III

ROMANTIC PRIMITIVISM

GAUGUIN AND THE SCHOOL OF PONT-AVEN

IN ANY study of the influence of the primitive in modern painting, Paul Gauguin obviously occupies an important place. His name has become synonymous with a geographical romanticism which has not yet lost its flavor, and has been made a symbol for the throwing off of the stifling superfluities of the hothouse culture of Europe to return to that more natural way of life of which Rousseau is the generally accepted advocate. In the first years of the twentieth century Gauguin was considered the typical bohemian-artist rejector of bourgeois living, with its stupid, encumbering artificialities; the typical simplifying artist, cutting both his life and his art to the bone in order that he might find and express reality. Not only did he become the symbol and the type, but by a shift familiar in the history of art, he came to be considered the originator of the movement he summarized. He was the "discoverer" of a primitivism which was simply the crutch of an ailing art. He was the beginning of a trend which achieved its final culmination in the Negro review.¹ He was the calm madman embodying actual sanity. We have seen that such praise or such reproach cannot be laid at Gauguin's door. He was not the first to feel the attraction of the provinces, either at home or overseas, and, except for definite imitators, artists' voyages after his time lessened rather than increased in extent. Nor were the artistic movements which followed him, whether the *fauves* in France or the expressionists in Germany, though they received an impetus from his life and from

his painting, due to his influence alone. There is, however, no doubt that this influence was great, and for this reason, as well as for his later position as a symbol, it is important for us here to determine the exact nature of Gauguin's primitivism, and to analyse his art so that we may fix his position in the history of primitivist evolution.

Because of the identification of Gauguin's life and his art, it is not merely permissible, but compulsory, to try to discover from his own writings his attitude towards the primitive. That Gauguin felt it was necessary to write about himself, to express himself through "private journals" written with an eye to the public as well as through his painting, indicates in itself that his relation to the primitive world in which he had chosen to live was not simple and direct. The whole tone of *Noa Noa* and *Avant et Après* is one of self-conscious revolt against a watching world.² It is not simply that the comparisons between the barbarian life of his choice and civilization are always in favor of the former, nor that his complaints are those of the misunderstood artist. It would not be natural that he should write otherwise; Tahiti, in spite of all its difficulties, gave him a better reception than Paris. But each incident that he relates, whether it is about the South Seas or not, each point that he makes, is a kind of parable, containing in itself and explaining all the wrongs of the insincere and complicated society that he had left and contrasting them with the simplicity and naturalness of the people of the South Seas. Thus his hatred of the church and its hypocrisies is concentrated in the story of the bishop and Thérèse, and his dislike of the provincial government with which he had such difficulty in the account of the administrator Ed. Petit.³ Each such story that he tells, whether it be of his exhibition in Copenhagen, closed on the morning of the first day, or of the Cabanels in the museum at Montpellier, is proof of his own rightness and the infamy of an overcomplicated culture.⁴ It is nevertheless this civilization which sets his standard of judgment and to which all other modes of existence must be referred, so that it is

impossible for him to describe his own life in Tahiti or that of the natives in the Marquesas without thinking of their tremendous distance from the European life that he has left. Such continual comparison means that Gauguin was dependent upon Paris for more than simply his livelihood, and that try as he might to assimilate himself to the native way of life, the center of his attention was still the artistic world of Paris. Yet Gauguin did not leave Paris (to mention an often forgotten fact) only to find a cheaper mode of living, else he would not have gone to Tahiti after having been to Martinique, and returned once again to Tahiti.⁵ His was an exoticism which thought that happiness was elsewhere but which at the same time—and this is what is characteristic of his part in a new tendency—sought not the luxurious and the intricately exotic of the earlier nineteenth century, but the native and the simple.⁶

It is typical of such an attitude, because it judges on the basis of contrast rather than directly, to call primitive any things which are sufficiently far removed from the kind or the style of object which it seeks to avoid, even though they may differ greatly among themselves. This opposition point of view makes it possible, and in a sense even reasonable, for Gauguin to say,

“Have before you always the Persians, the Cambodians, and a little of the Egyptian. The great error is the Greek, however beautiful it may be,”

since however far apart these arts may be, they all express themselves, as he says, “parabolically” and “mysteriously,” deforming nature in order to achieve a symbolic, and consequently a meaningful, beauty.⁷ Nor did it clash with these opinions that he should counsel his daughter:

“You will always find nourishing milk in the primitive arts, but I doubt if you will find it in the arts of ripe civilisations,”

because for him the Persians and the Egyptians, not being in the Greek tradition which had degenerated into academic art were

“primitive.”⁸ In a similar way, he was able to admire and to copy the Aztec sculpture at the Exposition of 1889, to praise the absence of values and perspective in Japanese art because this eliminates the possibility of taking refuge in the “illegibility” of “effects,” and to write what are probably the first lines in appreciation of Marquesan art, describing the “unparalleled sense of decoration,” and the “very advanced decorative art” of the people he was pleased to call “Maori.”⁹ But it is characteristic for Gauguin that his consideration of the excellence of this art should immediately lead him to a violent denunciation of the petty officials who could not appreciate it, and that his thought should then lead back, by way of the impudence of the officials’ judgment in view of their dowdiness to the “real elegance” of the Maori race, and particularly of the Maori women.¹⁰

The identification in Gauguin’s mind of the barbarian in art and the barbarian in living is important for our understanding of the development of primitivism, since in its subsequent evolution these two are separated.¹¹ Their union, and the symbolic value of the former for the latter, may be brought out from Gauguin’s reply to Strindberg’s letter declining to write a preface for the exhibition of February, 1895.¹² In his refusal, which he said was forced upon him because he did not understand Gauguin’s art, Strindberg characterises him as “the savage, who hates a whimpering civilization, a sort of Titan, who, jealous of the Creator, in his leisure hours makes his own little creation, the child who takes his toys to pieces so as to make others from them. . . .”¹³ Gauguin answers that what he had wished to realise was a revolt,

“a shock between your civilization and my barbarianism. Civilization from which you suffer, barbarianism which has been a rejuvenation for me. Before the Eve of my choice whom I have painted in the forms and the harmonies of another world, your memories have evoked a painful past. The Eve of your civilized conception nearly always makes you, and makes us, misogynist; the ancient Eve, who frightens you in my studio, might some day smile at you less bitterly. This world, which could perhaps not

rediscover a Cuvier, nor a botanist, would be a Paradise that I would have merely sketched. And from the sketch to the completion of the dream it is far. What matter! Is not a glimpse of happiness a foretaste of nirvana."¹⁴

It is true that Gauguin is talking here in a metaphor, but it accurately describes his attitude toward the "barbarian" (a word which he preferred to "primitive," perhaps because it renders more precisely his active opposition to the "civilized"), and suggests the atmosphere which pervades his pictures, because in them he uses the same metaphor with a constant recurrence.¹⁵ Gauguin approved Achille Delaroche's description of him as a painter of primitive natures, one who "loves them and possesses their simplicity, their suggestion of the hieratic, their somewhat awkward and angular naïveté."¹⁶ Nevertheless his primitives still have something of "*luxe barbare*" about them, a heritage of the whole exoticism of the nineteenth century, not so easily, nor quite wholeheartedly forgotten or suppressed.¹⁷ He said of himself that he had two natures, the Indian and the sensitive; and he whistles to keep up his courage: "The sensitive has disappeared, which allows the Indian to proceed straight and firmly."¹⁸ With these considerations in mind, and with these qualifications we may finally mention the sentence which is often taken to sum up Gauguin's whole aesthetic:

"I have gone far back, farther back than the horses of the Parthenon . . . as far back as the Dada of my babyhood, the good rocking-horse."¹⁹

A whole aesthetic may indeed be there, but it is not the aesthetic of Gauguin.

The most direct and obvious influence of primitive art upon the work of Gauguin is to be found in his wood-cuts, where he made use of decorative motives common in the wood-carving of the Marquesas. Marquesan decoration is found chiefly on ornamental club heads and foot-rests, and is almost wholly made up of stylizations of the face or separate features of the face, derived originally from "tiki" representations, the pattern most often used being the outline of the two

eyes, with the lines of the nose and prominent nostrils between. (Fig. 6.) Such motives are to be found in half a dozen of the woodcuts published by Guérin.²⁰ In No. 28, *Nave Nave Fenua*, for example, the band which borders the picture at the left consists of such Marquesan stylizations of the face, and these are used again in No. 44, called the figure of a Tahitian idol. In No. 50, a lithograph of the painting, *Manao Tupapu*, Gauguin uses the Marquesan form of nostrils and mouth below his initials in the upper left corner.

The restricted number of these direct copyings from the art of the South Seas may be open to the external explanation that Gauguin went to the Marquesas only in 1901, two years before his death.²¹ Tahiti, the island of his earlier residence, both on his first and second trips, is comparatively poor in indigenous art, producing almost no wood or stone sculpture, and little decorative carving. The influence from this source was therefore negligible, and though Gauguin may have known of Marquesan sculpture and decoration it apparently did not impress him sufficiently until it surrounded him in quantity in the place of its origin. At least *Avant et Après*, which we have quoted above in praise of the Marquesan sense of decoration, was written after 1901, and the one piece of sculpture which shows a direct copying similar to that of the wood-cuts, a cylinder, one side of which has in addition the Marquesan form of club-handle decoration with a semi-circular overhanging top, is also of these last years.²² (Fig. 5.) Thus Gauguin's contact with the most "primitive" art that he knew was comparatively unimportant, both in temporal extent and artistic pervasiveness and one may argue that had he known it longer it would have had more influence. Yet when he finally did come across a style that was "farther back than the horses of the Parthenon," he was open only to the vision of its flattest and most decorative aspects, ignoring its monumental sculpture in the round, and even then it did not change his own art in any radical fashion, but only influenced its minor details. We shall see from an analysis of his paintings that this

restriction is not accidental, and we can conclude that even had he had a greater opportunity, the grace and Pre-Raphaelite simplicity which were an integral part of Gauguin's conception of the primitive would not have permitted the assimilation of any of the intense and angular forms of Polynesia.

It is characteristic of Gauguin that having travelled half across the world he should still have been more generally influenced, though in a less precise and accurate way, by an art that was removed from him and that had nothing to do with the simple life he had sought out. The Indian gods and goddesses he had seen in Paris museums, sitting cross-legged on their stelae, seem to have made a real impression on him, one that he carried even to the South Seas. This posture is of course also that of Polynesia, and it correctly occurs in the paintings where only natives are portrayed. But that memories of Indian figures were still at work in Gauguin's mind is seen most clearly in several of the sculptured pieces, where motives of definite Indian iconography are repeated. The *Goddess Hina*, for example, touches her right hand to the ground and lays the other palm up in her lap, in characteristic Buddhist gestures; the figure on the cylinder in the collection of Alden Brooks sways in typical Indian fashion and wears an Indian headdress; and the large hips and soft modelling of the bodies are reminiscent of Indian (Gupta?) forms rather than of the hard angular bodies of Polynesian sculpture.²³

Though our chief concern is with his painting, our approach to Gauguin's art through his wood-blocks and his wood sculpture has not been accidental. The use of these media is in itself significant, permitting as they do the production of direct and immediate effects by simple means. The wood-cut particularly, working through extreme contrasts of large areas of light and dark, and necessarily doing away with any delicacy of line or refinement of modelling, is especially suited to the simplifying artist (or more exactly, one kind of simplifying artist), and we shall find it coming into prominence

again among the German "expressionists" who have much in common with Gauguin in their attitude toward the primitive.²⁴ In such a medium, characteristics which are present in Gauguin's painting in diluted form and mixed with the other ingredients of a more complicated method, are present in an obvious concentration.

In this major form of his expression, his attitude toward the primitive does not change. Direct copying of the elements of South Sea art Gauguin did not carry over into his pictures. The various figures which are meant to portray Polynesian gods represent not only the gods themselves, but Gauguin's idea of the manner in which the natives wished to render them. The seated deity in *The Day of the God*, for example, has that mixture of Polynesian and Indian traits which we have already noted, and posture and headdress are anything but native. (Fig. 8.) The goddess Hina occurs again in the background of *The Parrots*, painted in 1902, and with the same Indian gestures, and a similar figure occurs in the self-portrait of 1898 in the upper right corner.²⁵ But the figure which occurs the most frequently, and which was apparently of most importance to Gauguin, is one seated in profile on a low stool, with hands laid in its lap. The features of the face, with its flat nose and continuous line of forehead, nose, and lips, the square chin and large long ear, are Gauguin's way of typifying and generalizing the Polynesian facial characteristics. While the result bears some relation to the Marquesan stylization, it is apparent that Gauguin evolved the type himself. In Marquesan sculpture the generalization is achieved through geometrising and angularizing the original contours so that the form is never that of an individual, much less the copy of a living person.²⁶ With Gauguin, however, while there has been a smoothing and reduction of the contours in order to bring them within the oval of the head, the individual character remains, borne out by the curved forms of the rest of the body. He has attained vagueness rather than generality, and thus produced the brooding, terrifying quality by which

he meant to convey the atmosphere of primitive religion. Good examples of this particular figure are to be found in the *Mata Mua*, painted in 1892, and the *Hina Maruru*, of 1893. Here the mystery is emphasized by the profile position of the figure staring into space, as it is also in the famous *Spirit of the Dead Watching* (1892). (Fig. 7.) The same effect of hovering, unplaceable, awful spirits, which was one element in Gauguin's notion of the primitive, is also present in the *Hina Tefatou* (1893) in the enormous, dark half-figure rising from nowhere in the background, and in the *Poèmes Barbares* (1896) conveyed by the little crouching figure with bright staring eyes seated on a table in the left foreground.²⁷ (Figs. 3, 4.) To be sure this conception of primitive religion has little to do with the rather cheerful mythology of the Society Islands, but this only emphasizes the extent to which Gauguin's ideas were traditional and imported.

There is another side to Gauguin's rendering of the primitive; one as far from the truth, perhaps, as this "barbaric" interpretation, yet directly opposed to it. On the one hand he wished to bring out the exotic and the mysterious, and in connection with this he revelled in the personal freedom that was possible among these children of nature in contrast to the "civilized" restrictions of society, of the family, and of the church, institutionalized and hypocritical. This is one of the constant themes of his writings. On the other hand he interprets many Polynesian scenes in Christian terms, transforming the natives into historic figures of the church. The best-known example of this tendency is of course the *Ia Orana Maria* painted at the beginning of Gauguin's first stay at Tahiti (1891), a picture which is simply a transplantation of the Adoration to the South Seas, now done with native scenery and native actors. (Fig. 10.) By making of it a scene of every-day primitive life, the poses unstudied and the composition unsymmetrical, he has sought to take the hierarchical quality from it and thus to show again its original "simple" human meaning.

Nevertheless he is thinking in Christian, even if in Early Christian, terms, and imposing a European tradition and European morality which he himself had professedly gone so far to avoid upon a people whose unspoiled naturalness he claimed to enjoy and to have come to seek. This same almost missionary spirit is shown again in the drawing called *Adam and Eve*, in which Adam has become a Polynesian fisherman, dressed in a loin-cloth and with his rod over his shoulder, while Eve wears a shift of European manufacture, and the two are accompanied by the scrawny South Sea mongrel that Gauguin depicts so often. In *The Idol*, he has combined the barbaric and the Christian, placing behind the dark stone figure which overshadows the native group in the foreground in a typically mysterious way while the stone itself is only a black mass within which nothing can be distinguished, the scene of the Last Supper, with the tiny lighted form of Christ coming directly behind the native idol. In this manner Gauguin portrayed the unity of Christian and Polynesian beliefs; the latter might be mysterious, but behind them lay the same truth. But it is obvious that the feeling for the necessity of this demonstration was at variance with a simple acceptance of native life and customs.

The pictures which lack this specifically religious content, such as *Nave Nave Mahana* (1894), *Maternity, Woman and Children* (1901), and finally the allegory of life, *D'où venons-nous? Que sommes-nous? Où allons-nous?*, while they show the "state of nature" the desire for which we ordinarily connect with primitivism, nevertheless conceive this state of nature as having all those moral elements—work, and family life, and calm human contacts—that Gauguin claimed to despise. Of course this conception fits in with the general European tradition of the original golden day, and particularly with that of Rousseau, whose "state of nature" refers not to a primeval condition, but to one in which a definite cultural level had

been reached; but it was against this tradition, and especially against the sense of "duty" of this tradition, that Gauguin was rebelling.²⁸

The infusion of religious motives in Gauguin's work, and their interpretation in simple terms, leads naturally to a consideration of the painting of Gauguin's stay in Brittany. These pictures, painted in the years 1889 and 1890, already demonstrate many of the attitudes towards the primitive which we have discussed. They were influenced, as Maurice Denis has mentioned, and as is clear from the pictures themselves, by the local religious art, particularly the Calvaries, by Japanese prints, and by the *images d'Epinal*.²⁹ The last two show themselves in the bright colors applied in broad flat areas with clearly marked lines of separation, the first in the actual themes of the pictures, such as the *Calvary* and the famous *Yellow Christ* (both of 1889). (Fig. 9.) But again we see a contact with a variety of arts related merely by comparison with the art Gauguin was trying to avoid, and though they have a simplification of technique and an intensity of subject matter, their spirit is very different. And further it is obvious that he was attracted by the "simplicity" of the Breton peasants, and by their "simple," that is, their whole-hearted, faith. He renders them not as individuals who happen to be peasants, but as examples of the typical peasant. Their expressions, as in the group around the Christ, are without variation, and their gestures, as in *The Fight of Jacob and the Angel*, or the *Breton Girl in Prayer*, remain, in the symmetry and angularity of their motions, symbols rather than portrayals of religious reverence. In the same way the popular religious monuments are rendered in even further reduction and simplification than the originals, so that they become symbols of religious symbols, and lose even the expressive quality of the popular originals. Yet if these pictures are closer to the spirit of the scenes they portray (and by this we do not mean closer to the exact rendering of a particular scene) than are the similar subjects of Tahiti, it is because

Gauguin was approaching the latter through these, and because the French provincial scenes themselves were closer to that idea of the primitive which Gauguin had in his mind.

We have thus far not treated the purely formal elements of Gauguin's art directly, because the influence, even if not the assimilation, of the primitive, and his attitude towards it are more obvious in the subject matter of his pictures. Gauguin's method of painting was more primitivizing than primitive, both in the form that he attempted to achieve and in the interpretation of this form. In his use of broad areas of color applied flatly and in strong contrast with each other he was influenced, as we have mentioned, by Japanese prints and by the *images d'Epinal*, and he felt this to be in the direction of simplification and a return to the fundamental elements of painting.³⁰ This influence is of course more evident during the Brittany period, when light yellows, greens, and reds predominate, than in the later work, in which browns and dark reds increase. Even here, however, Gauguin did not really assimilate the "primitive" factors, substituting a smooth line and rhythmic undulating composition for the angularities and jagged sequences of these arts, and color harmonies which tended to become ever closer for their distant contrasts. Even here, where he was not really dealing with the primitive at all, he insisted, as Maurice Denis has said "on putting grace into everything."³¹ The same may be said of the lack of perspective and the reduction of the picture to a single plane, of which his theoreticians made so much; Gauguin achieves rather a succession of planes set up parallel to the picture surface and with spaces in between, much as a stage set might be arranged and without the construction of any real spatial volume.³² There is a more generally significant connection with the work of Puvis de Chavannes than the occasional borrowing of single figures.^{32a} The similarities, both of pictorial arrangement and iconographical ideals with a painter whose most obvious quality is an idyllic sweet-

ness are important to note, similarities which become strikingly apparent in the romantic transformation of Gauguin's effort at pictorial simplification by the members of the "School" of Pont-Aven, particularly in the art of Maurice Denis and Emile Bernard.

It cannot be our purpose here to discuss how far Gauguin approved the theoretical doctrines of the symbolist school, or to what extent he was their originator. They found their justification in his painting if not in the spoken word. The theories themselves, as developed by Aurier, Serusier, and Maurice Denis, differ among themselves, those of Aurier and Serusier tending toward the metaphysical and mystical, while those of Denis are more purely formal in character.³³ They have this in common, however, that they seek to return to the essential elements of art, to rid art of its anecdotal, documentary character and to make it a reflection of the important truths of the universe. Even Gauguin, though he is said not to have liked the theorizing tendencies of his disciples, wished to cease working through the eye, and instead to "seek at the mysterious center of the universe."³⁴ Aurier, in more high-flown language, desired to "reclaim the right to dream, the right to the pasturages of the sky, the right to take flight towards the denied stars of absolute truth."³⁵ The "subjective deformation" of which Denis speaks, is an attempt to rid art of the personal character of "nature seen through a temperament," by means of "the theory of equivalence of the symbol" thus making a picture the plastic reproduction of the emotion caused by a particular scene in nature, so that by the common symbol the same emotion might be produced in the spectator.³⁶ Such ideas were only new for the nineteenth century, they "are at the bottom of the doctrines of art of all ages, and there is no true art which is not symbolist." For this reason "the innovators of 1890 wished to ignore all the learned epochs, and to prefer the naïve truths of the savage to the 'acquired ones' of the civilized."³⁷

Maurice Denis has pointed out that synthetism, which only became symbolism in contact with poetry, was not at first a mystic movement

although it implied a correspondence "between exterior forms and subjective states."³⁸ If however, to synthetise meant "to simplify in the sense of rendering intelligible," it is strange that the painters should have had any contact at all with poets who were following the opposite course. Neither the ideal of Verlaine "*pas la couleur, rien que la nuance*," nor Mallarmé's preference for white and his wish finally to get rid of limiting words entirely had anything formally in common with the broad, flat, undifferentiated colors separated by a sharp dividing line and the bright hues that were the goal of the painters. The two groups were, nevertheless, allied in this, that both attempted to enter directly into the essence of things and to express them with as little intervening formal material as possible. Charles Chassé has indicated the emphasis of painters and poets on intuition, and has shown the parallel of Gauguin's eulogy of the savage and Veilé-Griffin's exaltation of the intuitive responses of illiterate conscripts.³⁹ Mallarmé went even further than Gauguin since, not content with interpretation through a symbol, he wished to do away with this also, leaving nothing but the white page, evocative of all because it contained nothing. If artists formally so far apart could recognize this affinity to the point of friendship and discussion, we are not mistaken in recognizing in the desire to return to the ultimate bases of experience one of the main elements of the art of the "School of Pont-Aven." We have already discussed the largely romantic form, a romanticism partly historic and partly geographic, that the expression of this desire takes in the painting of Gauguin. There is no need to consider in detail the work of the other members of the group, except to point out that aspects of Gauguin's art become clearer in their work. Thus Serusier continued the "Early Christian" elements of Gauguin, adding, however, a romantic medievalism of the kind that used early French spelling; and Bernard carried on the master's provincialism in subject matter and the colors of the Brittany period. These confirm our analysis of Gauguin's more complex art.

The subsequent work of these men adds nothing to the development of primitivism in any of its aspects, and they are without influence on other painters. In our next section therefore, we will deal with those artists who not only continued Gauguin's formal and iconographic ideas, undergoing the influence of his art, but who changed these ideas, intensified them, made them more immediate, brought them nearer home, and at the same time made their application more universal. These were the *fauves*, and we must now deal with their kind of primitivism.

Notes:

Gauguin and the School of Pont-Aven

- ¹ Cf. Deri, Max, *Die neue Malerei: sechs Vortraege* (Leipzig: Seemann, 1921), pp. 138-39. "So entdeckte er die 'Exotik.' Und in der Gefolge zog nun alles herauf, was Gegenpart gegen das differenzierte Erleben des fin de siècle bieten konnte."
- ² Gauguin, Paul, *Avant et Après* (Paris: Crès, 1923); and *Noa-Noa* (Paris: Crès, 1924).
- ³ Gauguin, Paul, *The Intimate Journals of Paul Gauguin*. Translated by Brooks, Van Wyck (London: Heinemann, 1931), pp. 11, 63.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 180, 191.
- ⁵ Cf. a letter to Willemsen: "Je vais aller dans quelque temps à Tahiti, une petite île de l'Océanie où la vie matérielle peut se passer d'argent." Quoted in Chassé, Charles, *Gauguin et le groupe de Pont-Aven* (Paris: H. Floury, 1921), p. 11.
- ⁶ Cf. Tschann, Gaspard, "Paul Gauguin et l'Exotisme," *L'Amour de l'art*, IX (1928), 460-64. Tschann places Gauguin in the direct line coming from the eighteenth century. Contrast the *splendeur orientale* of Baudelaire's *L'Invitation au Voyage* with the simplicity of Gauguin's ideal.
- ⁷ *Lettres de Paul Gauguin à Georges-Daniel de Monfried* (Paris: Crès, 1920), p. 187. (Letter of October, 1897.)
- ⁸ From the manuscript of his *Notes éparses* in the *Bibliothèque d'Art et d'Archéologie*, quoted in Guérin, M., *L'oeuvre gravé de Gauguin* (Paris: H. Floury, 1927), p. xx.
- ⁹ *The Intimate Journals of Paul Gauguin*, p. 75. "And I shall maintain that for me the Maoris are not Malaysians, Papuans, or Negroes." Gauguin's contention that the Marquesans and the Maoris are of the same race is supported by recent ethnology. See Linton, Ralph, *Ethnology of Polynesia and Micronesia* (Chicago: Field Museum, 1926), pp. 12, 16.

- ¹⁰ Gauguin, *op. cit.*, p. 69.
- ¹¹ See below, Chapters V and VI.
- ¹² The letter and reply were, together, used as a preface to the exhibition, held at the Hotel Drouot, Feb. 18, 1895. They are quoted by Rotonchamp, Jean de, *Paul Gauguin* (Paris: Druet, 1906), pp. 131-34.
- ¹³ Translation from Gauguin, *op. cit.*, p. 29.
- ¹⁴ Rotonchamp, *loc. cit.*
- ¹⁵ See also Gauguin's dedication of the *Intimate Journals*. "Moved by an unconscious sentiment born of solitude and savagery—idle tales of a naughty child . . ." The union of savagery and childhood is characteristic.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 31.
- ¹⁷ Tschann, *op. cit.*, *passim*.
- ¹⁸ From an unpublished letter to his wife from Pont-Aven, 1888; now in the *Bibliothèque d'art et d'Archéologie*, quoted in Guérin, *op. cit.*, p. xxviii.
- ¹⁹ Gauguin, *op. cit.*, p. 22. We must here emphasize the distinction, which we will attempt to make throughout, between the artist's expressed attitude to the primitive and that actually to be found in his painting.
- ²⁰ Guérin, *op. cit.* In addition to those mentioned in the text, there are the following: No. 18, showing a Marquesan stylised face on a log (?) in the upper left corner; No. 30, showing, to the right, a figure like that in the Alden Brooks collection, and, to the left, seated figures like those on the cylinder in the Monfried collection; No. 84, with three heads showing Marquesan influence but less stylised than these. No. 63 shows a Buddha with one hand in the gesture of meditation, the other that of calling the earth to witness.
- ²¹ April, 1901. He went to the island of Dominique. The change was due to an influenza epidemic, and to the fact that life was said to be much cheaper in the Marquesas than it had become at Tahiti. Kunstler, Charles, *Gauguin* (Paris: H. Floury, 1934), p. 126.
- ²² In the collection of Daniel de Monfried. The panel shows, below a cartouche, also from island motives, a Marquesan face with heads set into enlarged eyes in true Marquesan fashion, though one head is turned to the side in a manner never found in native work. Below this is a Crucifixion with a Christ of Marquesan features, but with bodily proportions and rendering derived from Easter Island statuettes, and geometrical ornament which reproduces Easter Island "hieroglyphics" set at the side. The reverse also contains a copy of an Easter Island statuette. This combination fits in with the interpretation we have given of the paintings. Rey, Robert, "Les Bois Sculptés de Paul Gauguin," *Art et Décoration*, LIII (1928), 57-64. The print made from the Crucifixion is not published by Guérin. The distinction between sculpture made as such, and that done as a block from which to print is not always clear.
- ²³ The *Goddess Hina* in the Monfried collection. There is probable medieval influence in the bust of Meyer de Haan, done at Le Pouldu, 1890.
- ²⁴ See below, Chapter V.

- ²⁵ Apparently Gauguin used the figure he had made as a model, rather than inserting it from memory.
- ²⁶ That this stylisation is not due to any lack of ability to create naturalistically may be seen from the statue in red tuff now in the Trocadéro Museum.
- ²⁷ Figures such as these occur nowhere in Polynesian art. Gauguin's explanation of the *Spirit of the Dead Watching* was probably suggested by Poe's analysis of *The Raven*.
- ²⁸ For an analysis of Rousseau's conception of the "state of nature" see Lovejoy, A. O., "The Supposed Primitivism of Rousseau's Discourse on Inequality," *Modern Philology*, XXI (1923), 165-86. Lovejoy shows that Rousseau advocated what was to him a third, rather than a primeval stage of development.
- ²⁹ Denis, Maurice, "De Gauguin et de Van Gogh au Classicisme," *Théories: 1890-1910* (Paris: Rouart & Watelin, 1930), p. 263.
- ³⁰ Gauguin, *op. cit.*, p. 162:
 "When I am in doubt about my spelling my handwriting becomes illegible. How many people use this stratagem in painting—when the drawing and colour embarrass them. In Japanese art there are no values. Well, all the better!"
- ³¹ Denis, *op. cit.*, p. 270. "Malgré sa volonté de faire *rustique* en Bretagne et *sauvage* à Tahiti, il met de la grâce en tout." However, it is not "in spite of," as we have seen; grace is an integral part of Gauguin's conception of the primitive. Chassé, *op. cit.*, p. 88.
- ³² See for example *The Day of the God*, where there are three such planes; and *Breton Girl* and *Breton Children* where there is a lack of middle ground such as is found in *quattrocento* portraits.
- ^{32a} Cf. *The Sunflowers* in which there is a copy of Puvis' *Hope*. The sideways sitting posture, with, however, the full width of the shoulders shown, that Puvis vies in his *Normandy* (1893) and his *Magdelene* (1897) is used by Gauguin in *The Queen of the Aréois* and the *Te Matelt*. The stiff gestures of the latter seem to indicate a directly Egyptian origin, probably also the original source for Puvis.
- ³³ Denis, *op. cit.*, *passim*. Serusier, Paul, *L'A. B. C. de la Peinture* (Paris: , 1921). Aurier, Albert, "Les Peintres Symbolistes," *Revue Encyclopédique* (1892). Denis' painting, however, is as mystical-medieval as that of Serusier; cf. his *Annunciation* in the Luxembourg.
- ³⁴ Quoted in Denis, *op. cit.*, p. 268.
- ³⁵ Aurier, *loc. cit.*
- ³⁶ Denis, *op. cit.*, p. 267. The phrase to which Denis objects was first used by Zola in an article on Courbet and Proudhon: "Une oeuvre d'art est un coin de la création vu à travers un tempérament." Zola, Emilie, *Mes Haines* (Paris: Charpentier, 1913), p. 24.
- ³⁷ Denis, *op. cit.*, p. 271. Cf. Matisse's desire, quoted below, to do away with the "acquired means."
- ³⁸ Denis, Maurice, "L'Influence de Paul Gauguin," *Théories: 1890-1910* (Paris: Rouart & Watelin, 1930), p. 168.
- ³⁹ Chassé, Charles, "Gauguin et Mallarmé," *L'Amour de l'Art*, III (1922), 246-56.

THE PRIMITIVISM OF THE FAUVES

In their knowledge of primitive art, the painters who constituted the group known as the "*fauves*" differed in one important respect from Gauguin. He was familiar with Aztec sculpture and with the work in stone and wood of the South Seas, but, if we except Asia and Egypt from the list of the primitive, he knew of no other indigenous non-European artistic tradition. The *fauves* added African sculpture to their list, and prided themselves upon being the first to discover and appreciate its aesthetic values.

The exact date and circumstances of this discovery are still somewhat in doubt, there being numerous claimants for the honor. The most convincing account, and the one traditionally best established, is that of Vlaminck who, in his autobiography, *Tournant Dangereux*, tells of seeing two negro statues behind the counter of a *bistrot*, between the bottles of picon and vermouth, and of buying them for two litres of aramon with which he treated the customers present.¹ He bought them because he experienced "the same astonishment, the same profound sensation of humanity" that he had had from the puppets of a street fair, which, however, he had not been able to purchase.² Vlaminck does not give the date of his discovery and acquisition, but, judging from its context, we may place it in the year 1904, and certainly not before 1903. The accuracy of this date is borne out by the fact that none of the others who wish to be called discoverers place their own findings earlier than this.³ Presumably Derain, who at this time was in close association with Vlaminck, soon saw the two statues and appreciated them as much as did his brother artist.⁴ Neither of these men, however, collected African sculpture to any considerable extent, the only one among the *fauves* to do so being Matisse, who early formed a large collection, which, outside of the *fauve* group was matched by that of Picasso, who made an independent discovery of negro art.⁵

The admiration of this new primitive tradition differed in some respects from any previous appreciation of exotic art. For the first time the products of a native culture were being considered as isolated objects, entirely apart from the context of their creation. Gauguin had had to go to the Marquesas to find Polynesian art, and its exotic content and association interested him as much as its form; even his copying of Aztec sculpture took place in the proper setting of a colonial exposition where its foreign origin could not easily be forgotten.⁶ The exact source of Japanese prints had always been kept in mind, even if their popular origin was ignored, and while they were admired as individual objects of art, they always kept their connection with a definite foreign culture. The admiration called forth by these individual pieces of African sculpture, however, returns in a double sense to an earlier stage in the history of the taste for the primitive: We have mentioned above that the first objects of native art were collected as curios, objects which were evidence of the diversity of the human imagination and of the ingenuity of the primitive craftsman.⁷ In Vlaminck's appreciation of African sculpture there is still something of this attitude, so that in part he is drawn to these statues by their strangeness and their curiosity, rather than by their qualities as works of art. For this reason he "cannot keep himself from smiling" at the later developments in the history of African art, the determination of its origins, its arrangement and its classification, all of which is taken so seriously.⁸ The other side of this attitude (likewise a throw-back in taste) is the consideration of these objects as symbols, one might almost say mystical symbols, of the primitive. Thus Vlaminck and the other artists who early collected African sculpture preferred objects which our present knowledge shows are poor examples of their respective styles, either because they are by inferior craftsmen or because they are representative of a late stage of evolution.⁹ We may indeed call them "poor" in the purely technical sense of mastery over the material, without introducing any aesthetic qualifications at all.

But objects of this kind corresponded better to the idea of the primitive work of art which they were considered as embodying, so that more could be read into them than into better finished examples. There is still something of the notion of the compulsory childishness of African technique and its inability to produce accomplished work; a reversal of the evaluation, but still the same conception which had made it impossible to accept the bronzes of Benin as really African because their technical mastery resembled too closely the work of more developed cultures.¹⁰ Thus ignorance concerning primitive culture, once simply a fact, is consciously preserved as a positive value, and the combined (if opposed) attributes of childishness and mystery can still be attached to the primitive object. Even today the surrealist enjoyment of native art contains much of this double exoticism.

In spite of the separation of the statues from their context, therefore, the *fauves'* appreciation of African sculpture was not the isolated admiration for the solution of a purely formal problem. Such admiration for primitive works of art did not come about before the time of the cubists, and even then, as we shall see, such a pure-form point of view was more an ideal than a fact.¹¹ The aesthetic attitude of the *fauves*, while it goes further than that of Gauguin, is still mixed with much of his romanticism. This can be seen in their continuing admiration for anything that is primitive, or that they consider primitive, regardless of whether its formal qualities resemble those of other primitive works which they also admire. Thus Vlaminck and Derain collected not only negro sculpture, but provincial and popular art as well—the *images d'Epinal* of Gauguin, and the labels on packages of chicory.¹² But the Egyptian and the Asiatic were neither provincial nor bizarre enough for inclusion in this modern curio collection. That such was really their attitude is further borne out by the absence of any direct influence of primitive art upon the painting of the *fauves*; there is no trace of either African or Oceanic production in form or subject matter of their pictures, and while the knowledge of Japanese

prints makes itself felt, their style was largely absorbed through the medium of Van Gogh's art.¹³ The art of the Douanier Rousseau also was known to the group and interested its members, but as Marquet has mentioned, it "remained entirely outside of our work."¹⁴

Lacking any direct borrowing of subject matter or copying of form from the primitive, in what does the primitivism of the *fauves* consist? It is evident in the first place in their choice of subjects to paint, and their relation to these subjects. One of the most common themes is that of nudes bathing in a landscape, a scene neither new nor original, yet given a treatment, quite apart from the method of drawing and the handling of color, which sets it off from anything that has gone before. The figures are not simply placed in a landscape setting which serves them as a scene of action while they yet preserve their human characters distinct from it, but they are mixed up with the landscape in such a manner that they become part of it. In the Derain *Baignade* of 1907, for example, the legs of the figure on the left are covered by the water, while the branches of a tree hide the arms of the figure on the right. The same mixing up and cutting off is found in the Derain *Bathers* of 1908 and in the treatment of the same theme by Vlaminck. (Figs. 11, 12.) Coupled with this is the cutting of figures by the frame of picture, which by an amputation similarly carried out in the fragmentary character of the landscape, also indicates that they are not considered as set within the natural scene, but as being coextensive with it.

Another aspect of the artists' attitude toward the human beings of their pictures is embodied in the lack of mutual psychological relation or of any active demonstration of emotion in general which these display. The scene portrayed is just a group of figures which stand or sit or lie about, looking into or out of the picture, but almost never at each other. There is no unified action which brings them into mutual play, as in the bathing scenes of Renoir, nor are there various stages of action leading toward the same goal, as in the *Bathers* of Daumier.

The poses and the gestures of the figures have no exterior determinant which can be grasped by the spectator, but are seemingly compelled solely by the interior mood of each figure. On the other hand it is the implications of this mood in its still preserved "synthetist" qualities which differentiates these bathers from the likewise depersonalized constructions of Cézanne. They are, so to speak, not constructions, but reductions. The feeling of mood thus created, of the rendering of a symbolic scene which is to work upon the beholder by its symbolic qualities, by the suggestion of things outside itself, rather than a scene complete in itself and external to the spectator, is forcibly heightened by the filling of the frame by the figures. They reach from the top to the bottom of the picture, and are often incomplete at both extremes. Not being set back into the picture by any strip of foreground, lacking perspective depth and psychological distance, they bear upon the spectator immediately without any intervention of artificial setting; not bearing any relation to each other, but still partaking of a pervasive mood, they have an undetermined, but apparently important, relation to the spectator. We may note this effect in the Matisse *Baignade* of 1907(?), and his *Women by the Sea* of 1908, as well as in the Vlaminck *Bathers* and the Derain *Composition* of the same year. (Figs. 13, 15.)

The combination of immediacy and remoteness, of direct, intense appeal and unlimited implication, is not a paradox. We shall find it again in different forms in the later developments from cubism and in the painting which derives its inspiration from the art of children.¹⁵ Among the *fauves* it varies in its application, the shore scenes of Matisse using the broad expanse of sand and water which is cut off at random and against which the figures are placed in emptiness—while the forest scenes of Derain and Vlaminck achieve the same unlocalized effect by the crowding together of figures and foliage in a uniform pattern so that the scene is indeterminate. (Fig. 13.) This random cutting differs from that of the early-impres-

sionist work of the seventies where, though objects are cut by the frame of the picture, they are cut so that they retain their identity as complete and discrete objects even though they may finish outside of the frame; must, indeed, be completed in the mind of the spectator if the much desired "slice of life effect" is to be achieved. It differs also from that of the late impressionist landscapes in which though the natural objects—trees, fields, water, and so on—may continue indefinitely, the composition of light upon surface, the true subject of these pictures, is self-contained within them.

It is true that in certain of the *fauves* paintings there are figures which, in their bent forms and closed contours recall certain primitive and prehistoric work. (E.g., Matisse, *Baignade*, 1907, and *Women by the Sea*, 1908; Vlaminck, *Bathers*, 1908, and 1909.) Such similarity is hardly due to direct copying. May we perhaps explain it by this very effort to give the figures meaning beyond themselves, replacing by an isolated emotional symbolism the natural and direct symbolism of the primitive peoples which gives the single figure meaning through its religious context but which, in order to produce a magically efficacious image, must turn it back upon itself in a way that the allusive ramifications of later mythological and hierarchical developments prevent. We will return in a later chapter to this same theme.¹⁶

We may perhaps emphasize the point of view we have been analyzing by a comparison with two other bathing scenes of an earlier period. They are not the only pictures which could be chosen, but they will serve to bring out, by contrast, the *fauve* attitude. In the Daumier *Baignade* the movement of the figures is motivated by an obvious action, that of undressing in preparation for the bath. All the figures have this common purpose, and they are shown in different stages of preparation for a common action, beginning on the right and culminating in the nude figure on the left. This figure is presented as unusual in its setting and is contrasted with the land-

scape in which it is put both by its differentiation from the other dressed or half-undressed figures and by the way in which it is silhouetted against the background. It is daring both in action and in presentation. In the *fauves* pictures not only is the nudity accepted (there being nothing to contrast it with), but by lack of concerted action and by similarity of modelling the figures are made to count in the same way—though not always to the same extent—as the surrounding landscape. A like contrast may be pointed out between these canvases, traditionally labelled *Bathers*, and the correctly named *Bathers* of Renoir. Here the figures are made to constitute a whole separated from an artificial setting by means of an active relation with each other, either actually physical or established through gestures and glances. The nakedness of the figures is brought out by hats and ribbons which lie about, adding piquancy to the scene, while the method of modelling the trees and grass is different from the treatment of the bodies. The *fauves* treat their subjects with a directness which is at the opposite pole from this half aesthetic, half sensual, conscious appreciation. (Fig. 14.)

If we have discussed the iconography of the painting of the *fauves* before dealing with their methods, it is because the latter have usually been given much more consideration. The simplification of means, the use of a broad, unfinished line, the application of large areas of undifferentiated color, the use of pure color, the lack of perspective, both in the individual figures and in the composition as a whole, these are the most obvious characteristics of *fauve* painting. Stemming from Gauguin, from Van Gogh, and from Seurat, they mark a further simplification of the methods of these painters, a simplification which is in two respects primitivizing but which likewise had consequences pointing directly away from primitivism.

In the purely technical sense, the coarsening of line, the direct application of color from tube to canvas, the lack of concern about nuances within the color surface, the neglect of the general finish

of the picture are in accordance with the appreciation of children's art and the kind of technically poor primitive art which the *fauves* admired. Like these, the appeal of *fauve* painting does not depend upon the mastery of a sophisticated craftsman's language, but upon the immediate effect of the canvas as a whole. They are not concerned with subtleties of drawing or nuances of color, nor do they worry about carefully balanced masses and harmonious composition. If the *fauves* pictures reproduce so badly in black and white it is because they depend upon the violent effect of broad areas of color which are nearly of the same tonality, colors which impress themselves on the beholder by a common brilliance which disappears in reproduction. The desire is to interpose as little of the consciousness of the medium as possible. Even where the actual application of the paint is divisionist in method, it is not really so, since there is no longer any concern about complementary colors or the fusion of these colors into a different whole. Toward the same end the palette is also reduced, only "pure" colors being used, that is, no colors were mixed before being applied, but because no active fusion is required of the spectator there are even fewer obstacles between him and the painter than in the method of Seurat. In this the *fauves* are closer to the manner of Gauguin and his wish to produce flat decorative harmonies than to either of the other principal influences working on them, even though their bright palette and pure colors stem directly from Van Gogh and to a lesser extent from Seurat.

The reduction of the means employed by the *fauves* to color areas and to a limited selection of colors, is matched by a similar simplification in the appeal of their pictures. These are not paintings to be studied and analyzed at length, compositions in which intricate relations can be grasped only after prolonged contemplation. Their appeal, both iconographic and formal, is immediate and direct. Their aim is to produce a visual and emotional response which, without reflection, will "engage the whole personality," whether by means

that shock, as Derain implies in "reinforcing the expression" of the Ghirlandaio that he copied in the Louvre;¹⁷ or by means that comfort, as in Matisse's wish to make his art "something like a good armchair in which to rest from physical fatigue."¹⁸ Color is to be used "to render emotion without admixture, and without means of construction," to portray the actual "vibration of the individual . . . rather than the object which has produced this emotion."¹⁹ Communication between artist and spectator no longer is through the indirect means of rendering matter in such a way that it will produce in the latter the emotion that it aroused in the former, but emotion is to be rendered directly. "One does not depict matter, but human emotion, a certain elevation of spirit which might come from no matter what spectacle."²⁰ Such emotion, simple and wholehearted in itself, can only result from simple means. (Fig. 16.)

On the other hand, the replacing of the world of objects by simple human emotion has in it, as we have already noted in our analysis of the composition of certain *fauves* pictures, implications far beyond the canvas itself:²¹

"The painter remains in intimate contact not alone with a motive, but also with the infinite nebulosity . . . (He) refuses nothing . . . of omnipresent space, let us rather say of extension."²²

Emotionally as well as in its formal structure, the picture becomes a symbol whose very vagueness increases its possible meaning. This grasping of reality through emotion has been compared with the philosophy which Bergson was contemporaneously expounding at the *Collège de France*.²³ Without going into the resemblances in detail, we may note the anti-intellectual, anti-analytical aspect of the two phenomena, and their similar attempt to grasp reality by means of a return to something fundamental in the human being, to do away with a developed superstructure, with, as Matisse has said, "the acquired means," in favor of something native and simple. In so far we may speak of both movements as primitivizing.²⁴

Their effort to "return to naked simplicity" had induced the *fauves* to reduce their methods of communication to one, namely that of color, and to employ this as directly as possible. This very reduction, however, necessitated in the end an amplification and refinement of expression through color which is far removed from the simplicity that was at first envisaged. Lacking an interior elaboration of the canvas, only one thing can be said with one means, and it was just the elaboration of this means that those who remained closest to the *fauve* method undertook. This is first evident in the work of Matisse whose exclusion of line was never as drastic as was that of some of the later adherents. Already in the *Joie de Vivre* (1906-7), "the climax of the *fauve* period," which, iconographically, has much of the idealization of simplicity and union with nature which we have noted above, there is "a flowing arabesque of line" and the indication of a succession of planes which are anything but simple.²⁵ In a composition of this kind the eye must follow the separate parts and move rhythmically about the picture, rather than grasp it as a whole, and it is this which distinguishes the *Women by the Sea* (1908) from the static *Music* (1910) as well as the moving *Dance* (1909-10), close as it is in other respects.²⁶ (Figs. 11, 12.) In Matisse's painting from 1910 on the use of color is continually refined, both in the tones used and in their combination in unexpected form, and in their employment to establish (often by extremely knowing allusions to previous styles), the structural composition of the pictures. This is also true of the work of Dufy, in which an apparently childish linear technique has been adapted with the utmost sophistication. His "bad" drawing is elliptical to such an extent, suggesting everything which it pretends it cannot represent, that it is really the exact negation of the child's attempt to set down in accurate detail all that he can recall about an object or a scene. And Dufy adds to this method color harmonies and juxtapositions of line and color which have become ever subtler since his *fauve* days.

The other *fauve* painters also recognized, although in a different way, the difficulty of expressing themselves in colors "whose choice is determined solely by the exigencies of a tonal register."²⁷ Thus Vlaminck explains that because color led away from the comprehension of the universe, the original reason for its use, he was led to renounce it:

"It was necessary therefore to return to the feeling for things, abandoning the acquired style. Captured by light, I neglect the object. Either one thinks nature, or one thinks light. . . . I had to look for the interior character of things, save the feeling for the object. . . . Thus a more profound comprehension of the universe led me to modify my palette."²⁸

Friesz likewise, seeking "the maximum of expression," was led to renounce "the technique of colored orchestration" in favor of a "return to construction" which would render more adequately the emotions experienced before nature.²⁹

With this renunciation we too may halt our study of the search for the primitive and the essential among the *fauves*, to begin it again among the works of other painters. In comparison with the conception of Gauguin, that of the *fauves* is at once less localized and closer to home. In spite of the tropicalizing of much of their work, the scenes of the *fauves* do not have the definite locale nor the precise exotic associations of Gauguin's subjects, whether provincial or Polynesian. In their technique too, the *fauves* were more radical than the school of Pont-Aven, abandoning the conscious grace of "objective deformation" in favor of subjective composition. No longer seeking interior equivalents of an exterior world, no longer, that is, symbolists, they attempt to short-circuit the connection and establish direct communication between individual and universal essentials. In the next chapter we will continue the study of this kind of emotional primitivism, noting how it once more became localized, partly by a return to exoticism, and partly by its application to the personal and contemporary environment of the painter.

Notes:

The Primitivism of the Fauves

¹ Vlaminck, Maurice de, *Tournant dangereux. Souvenirs de ma vie* (Paris: Stock, 1929), p. 88.

² *Loc. cit.*

³ André Level, verbally, June 4, 1934, mentioned that he began collecting in 1904. D. H. Kahnweiler (verbally, June 6, 1934) also places the discovery of negro sculpture in 1904, and attributes it to Vlaminck.

⁴ Verbally, Kahnweiler. There was a shop in the Rue de Rennes run by Heman, where the artists bought.

⁵ Verbally, Kahnweiler, June 6, 1934. It is interesting to note that Matisse did not collect Persian miniatures, even though they influenced his work.

⁶ See above, p. 60.

⁷ See above, Chapter I, Part I, p. 3.

⁸ Vlaminck, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

⁹ Verbally, Charles Ratton, May 27, 1936, who was kind enough to show me photographs of objects coming from various collections to substantiate this point.

¹⁰ See above, Chapter I, Part II, p. 37.

¹¹ See below, Chapter V, p. 124.

¹² Huyghe, René (Editor), *Histoire de l'art contemporain. La peinture* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1935), p. 105.

¹³ Quotation from Albert Marquet in Duthuit, Georges, "Le Fauvisme, II," *Cahiers d'art*, IV (1929), 260-61.

¹⁴ *Loc. cit.*

¹⁵ See below, Chapters V and VI.

¹⁶ See below, Chapter VII.

¹⁷ Quotation from Derain in Duthuit, *op. cit.*, p. 268:

"J'ai copié au Louvre un Ghirlandaio, jugeant nécessaire, non seulement de remettre de la couleur, mais de renforcer l'expression. On a voulu me mettre à la porte du Louvre pour attentât à la beauté."

The picture is not a Ghirlandaio, but by Giovanni Utili; cf. Van Marle, R., *The Italian Schools of Painting* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff), XIII, 177.

¹⁸ Matisse, Henri, "Notes of a Painter," translated by Barr, Alfred H., *Henri-Matisse* (N. Y.: Museum of Modern Art, 1931), p. 35. The following may also be added:

"It is through it (the human figure) that I best succeed in expressing the nearly religious feeling that I have towards life. . . . The simplest means are those which enable an artist to express himself best."

¹⁹ Duthuit, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

²⁰ *Loc. cit.*

²¹ Duthuit, Georges, "Le Fauvisme, V," *Cahiers d'art*, VI (1931), 80. Duthuit's analysis becomes itself somewhat mystical:

"(La toile) possède une vitalité élémentaire; elle représente la cellule, choisie dans un organisme sans limite, par où la vie supérieure de l'esprit doit s'infuser au corps tout entier."

²² Duthuit, Georges, "Le Fauvisme, IV," *Cahiers d'art*, V (1930), 130. Cf. Bergson.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 132. Bergson's philosophy, in so far as it is primitivising, is not to be compared particularly with the primitivism of the *fauves*; the parallel is rather between this (and other anti-intellectual theories, e.g. Croce's aesthetic) and the general primitivising tendency.

²⁴ Marquet and Matisse seem to have been the first to employ the *fauve* method, in the sense of using pure, flat color; Marquet puts the date as early as 1898, and considers 1905, usually given as the beginning of *fauvisme*, as the beginning of the last stage. Duthuit, "Le Fauvisme, II," *Cahiers d'art*, IV (1929), 260-61.

²⁵ Barr, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

²⁶ Cf. also *Le Luxe* (1906), which has the same quality as *Women by the Sea*, and many of the characteristics analyzed above.

²⁷ Duthuit, *op. cit.*, p. 262.

²⁸ *Loc. cit.*

²⁹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 259-60.

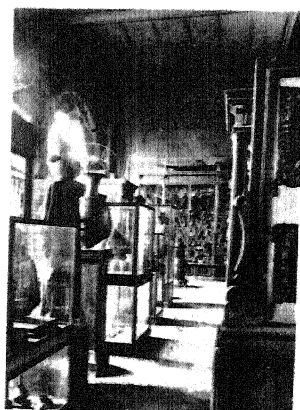
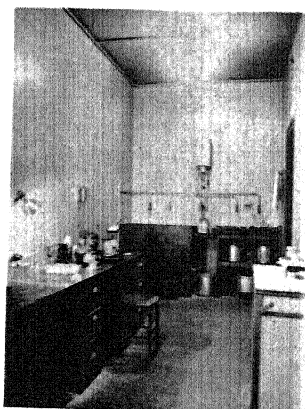


Fig. 1(b) PARIS: Trocadéro;
old installation

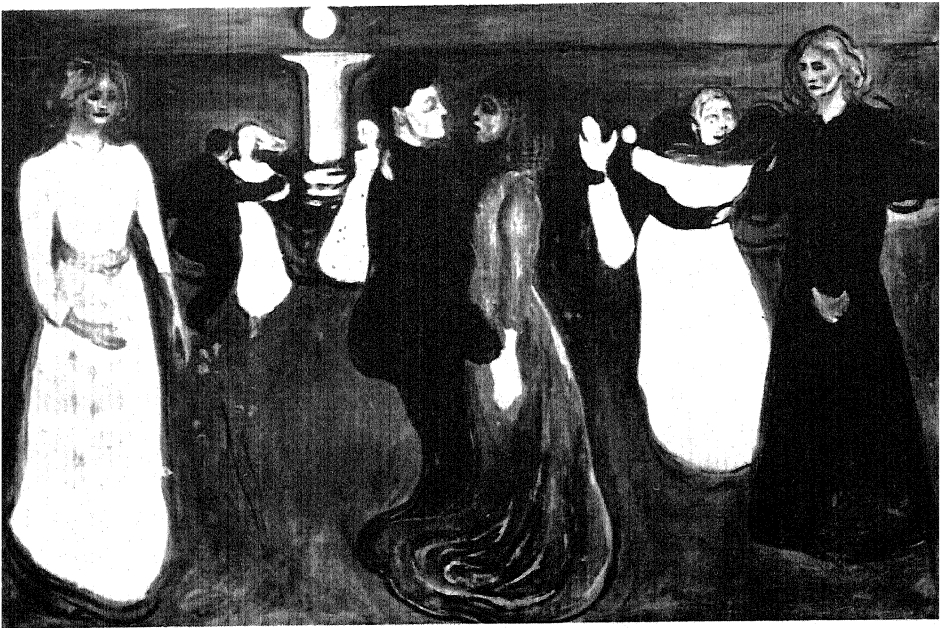


Fig. 1(a) PARIS: Trocadéro, Library;
old installation



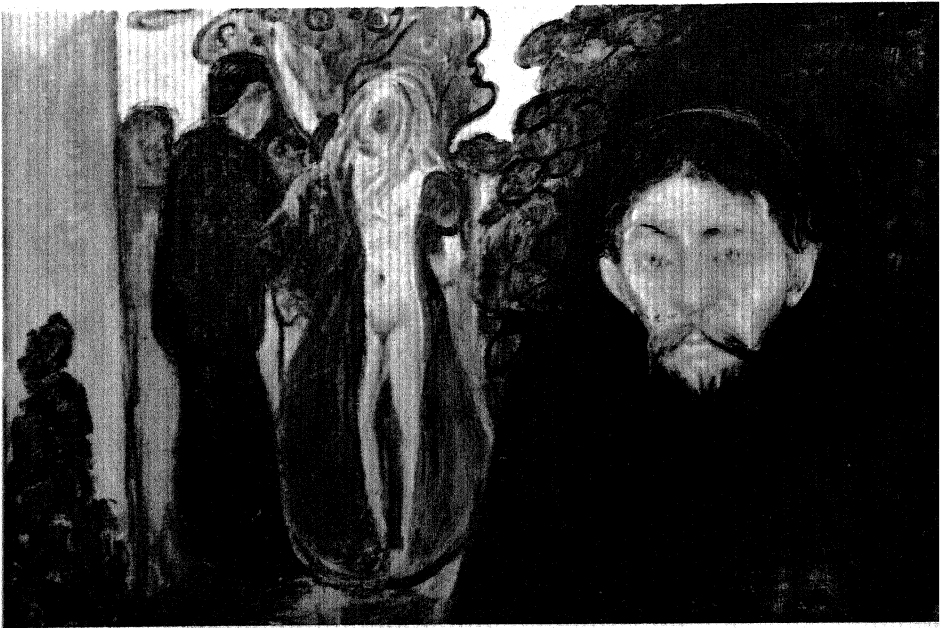
Fig. 2 PARIS: Trocadéro; installation after reorganization of 1933-34

PLATE II



Oslo, National Gallery

Fig. 3 MUNCH: Dance of Life. 1894

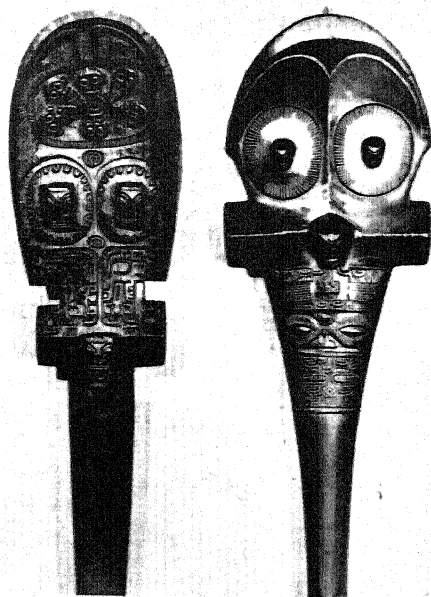


Oslo, National Gallery

Fig. 4 MUNCH: Jealousy. 1895



New York, Metropolitan Museum



Paris, Trocadéro

Fig. 6 MARQUESAS ISLANDS:
Decorated Staffs

Fig. 5 GAUGUIN: Woodcut

PLATE IV

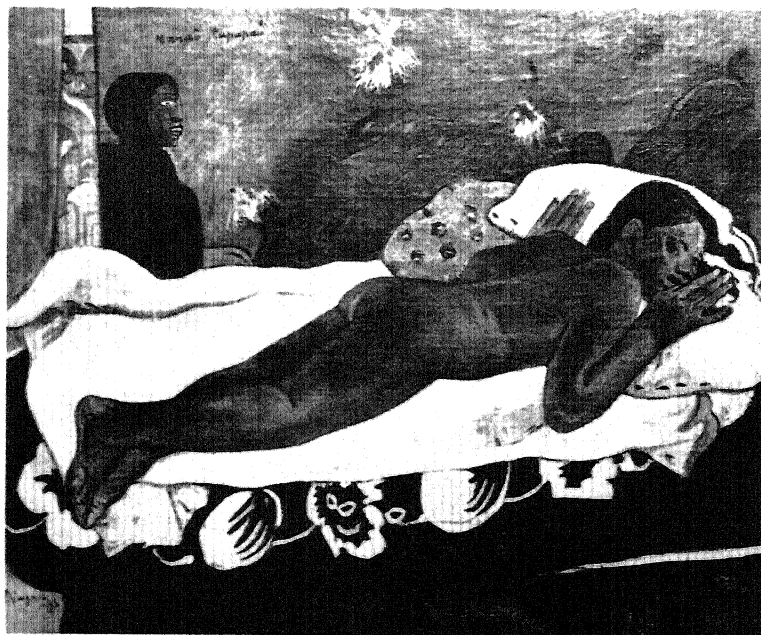


Fig. 7 GAUGUIN
The Spirit of the
Dead Watching.
1892

New York: A. Conger Goodyear Collection

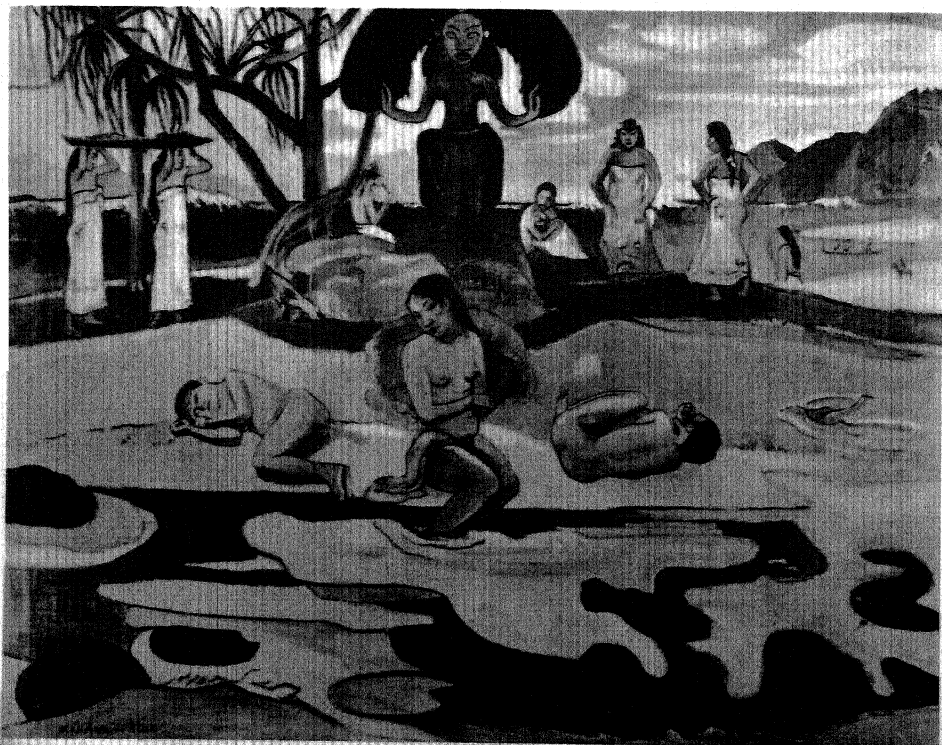
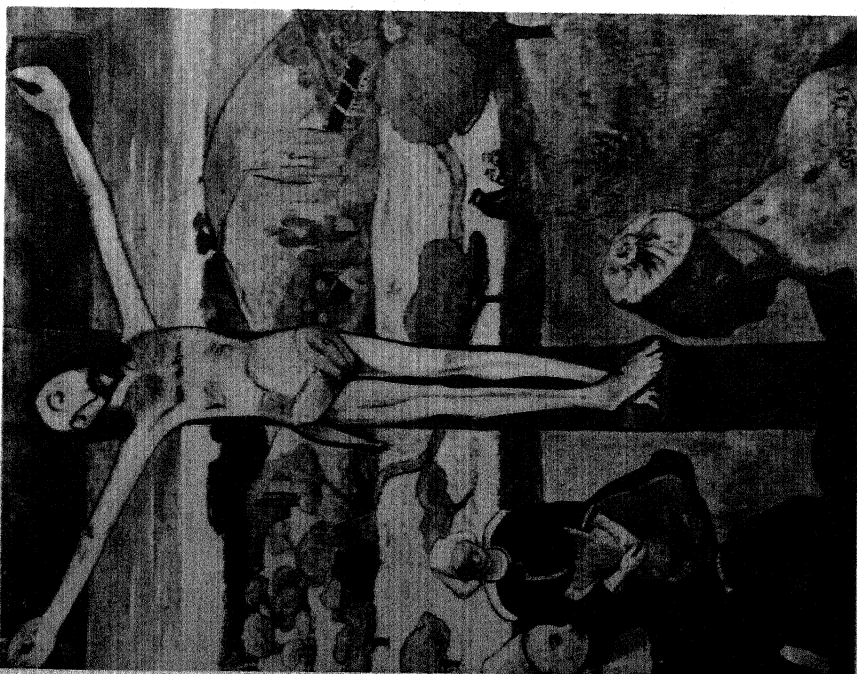


Fig. 8 GAUGUIN: The Day of the God, 1904

Courtesy of the Art Institute of Chicago



Formerly Paul Rosenberg Collection

Fig. 9 GAUGUIN: The Yellow Christ. 1889



New York, Lewisohn Collection

Fig. 10 GAUGUIN: Ia Orana Maria. 1891

Fig. 11 VLAMINCK:
Bathers. 1908



Photo. Courtesy Galerie Simon



Fig. 13 DERAIN: Composition, 1908

Fig. 12 DERAIN: Bathers, 1908

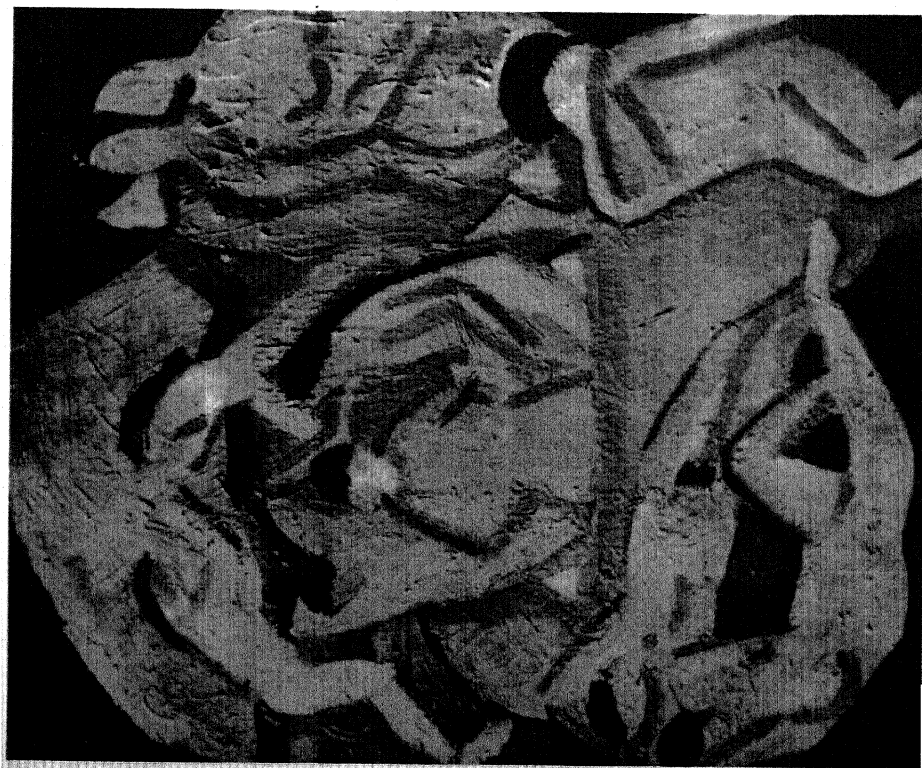


Photo. Courtesy Galerie Simon

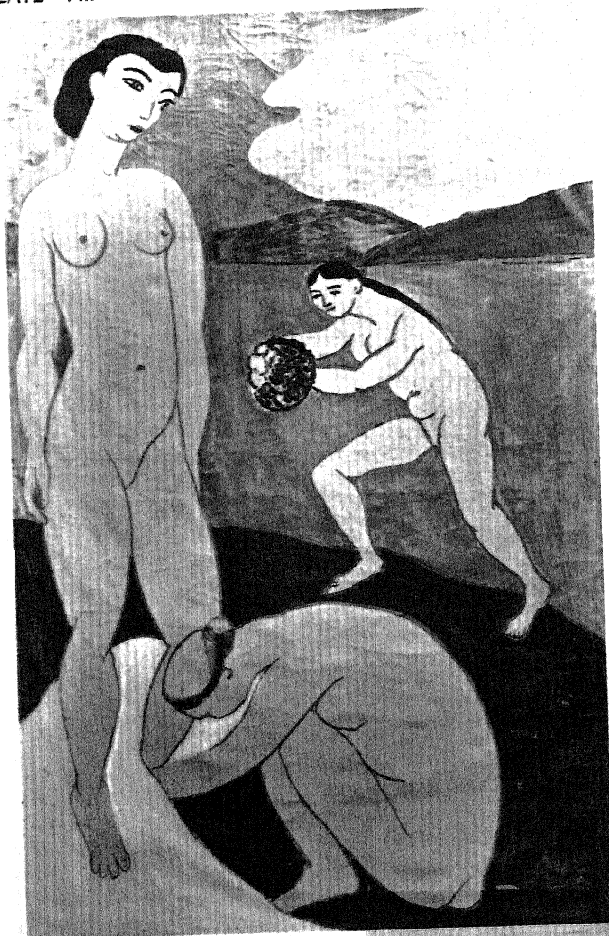
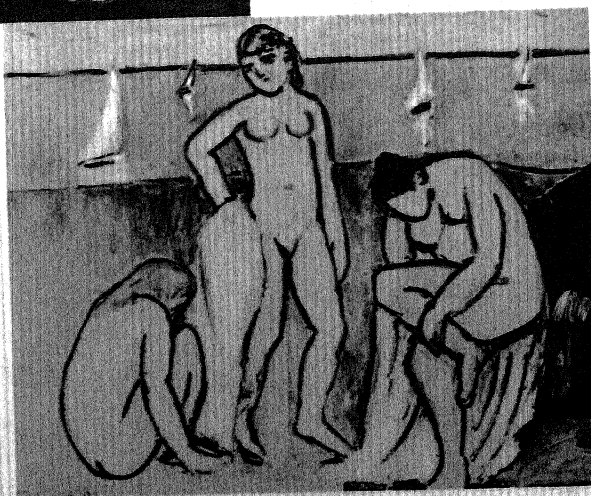


Fig. 14 MATISSE:
Le Luxe. 1908

Copenhagen: Museum. Photo. Giraudon

Fig. 15 MATISSE:
Women by the Sea.
1908



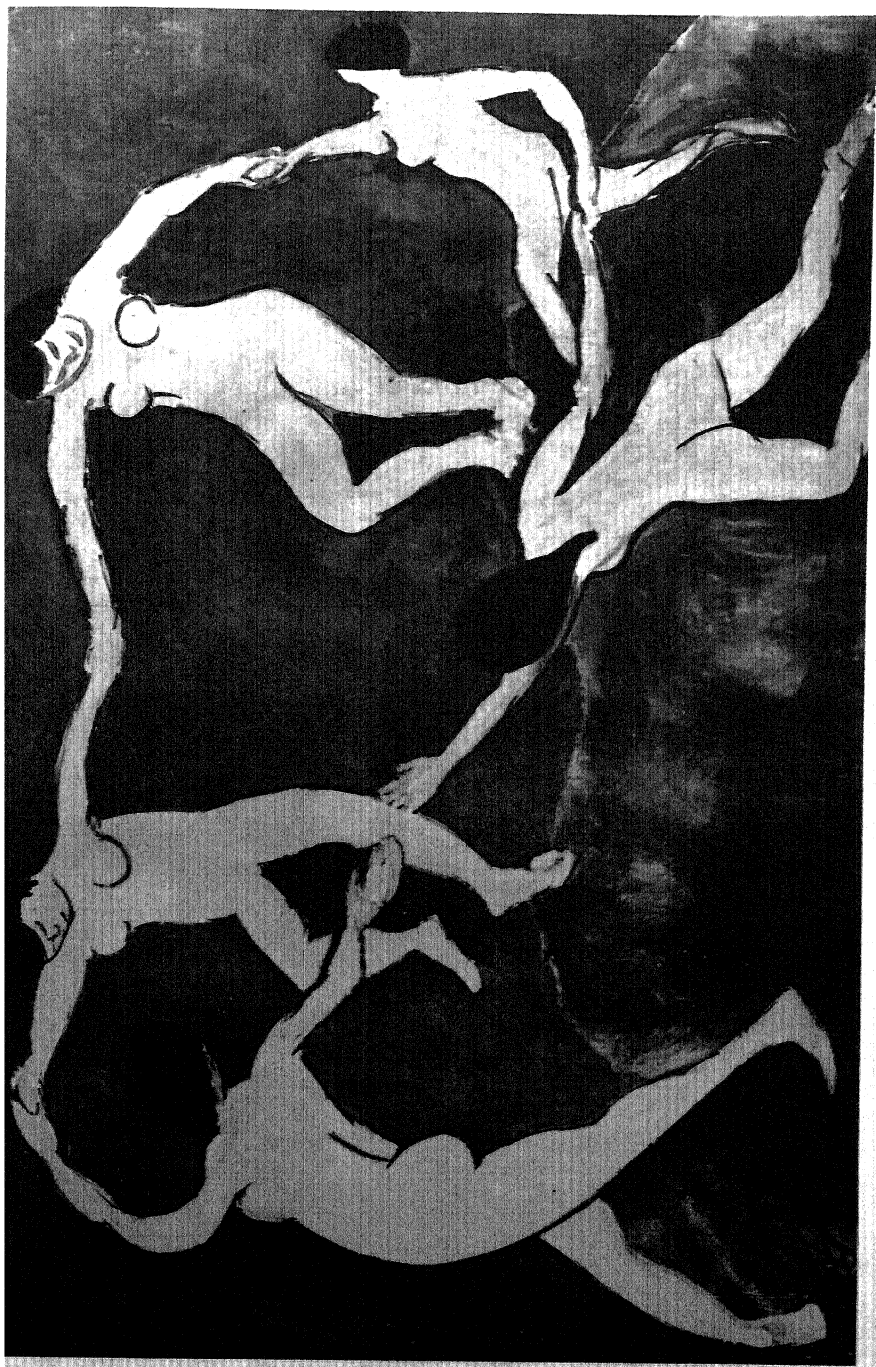


Photo. Courtesy Pierre Matisse Gallery

Fig. 16 MATISSE: *The Dance*, 1909-10

PLATE X



Fig. 17 NOLDE: Masks. 1911

Essen: Folkwang Museum (formerly)

Fig. 18 NOLDE:
Indian Dancers. 1915



Detroit: Dr. W. R. Valentiner Collection



Photo. Courtesy Buchholz Gallery

Fig. 19 NOLDE: Death of Mary of Egypt



Fig. 20 HECKEL: Bathers (woodcut). 1911



Fig. 21 MUELLER: Girls Bathing. 1921

Detroit: Dr. W. R. Valentiner Collection



Fig. 23 HECKEL: Self-Portrait (lithograph), 1914



Fig. 22 KIRCHNER: Bathers



Fig. 25 NOIDE, Brother and Sister



Fig. 24 HECKEL, Portrait Study, 1918
Detroit, Dr. W. R. Valentiner Collection



Fig. 27 MARC: Tower of Blue Horses, 1913
Berlin: National Gallery



Fig. 26 CAMPENDONK: Saturday (watercolor), 1918
New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation



Fig. 28 MARC: The Apes. 1911

Berlin: Bernard Koehler Collection

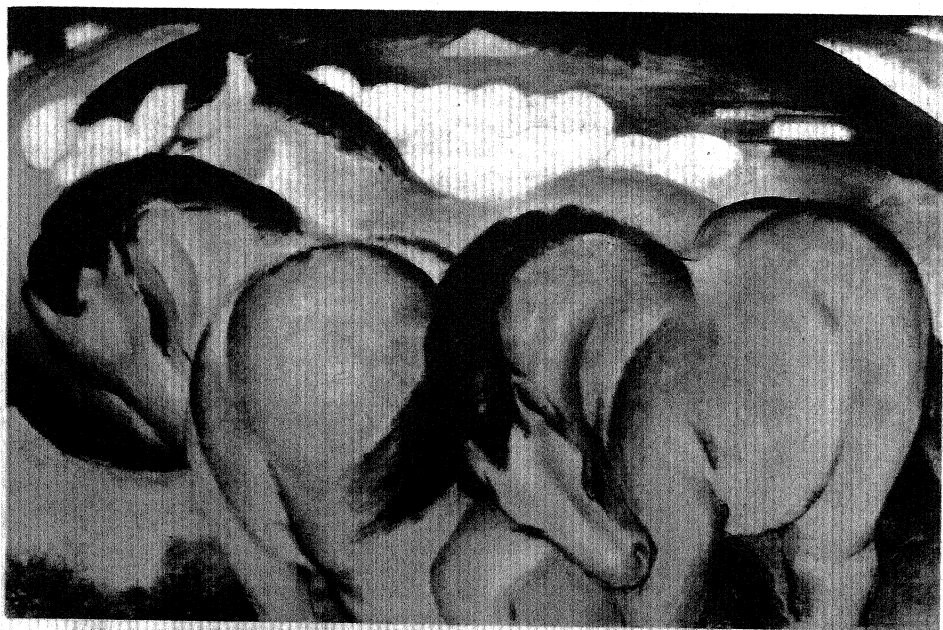


Fig. 29 MARC: Gold Horses. 1912

Photo. Courtesy F. A. R. Gallery



Fig. 30 KANDINSKY:
The Lake. 1910

Moscow: State Tretyakov Galleries



Fig. 31 CHAGALL:
Russian Mood. 1911

New York: J. B. Neumann Collection

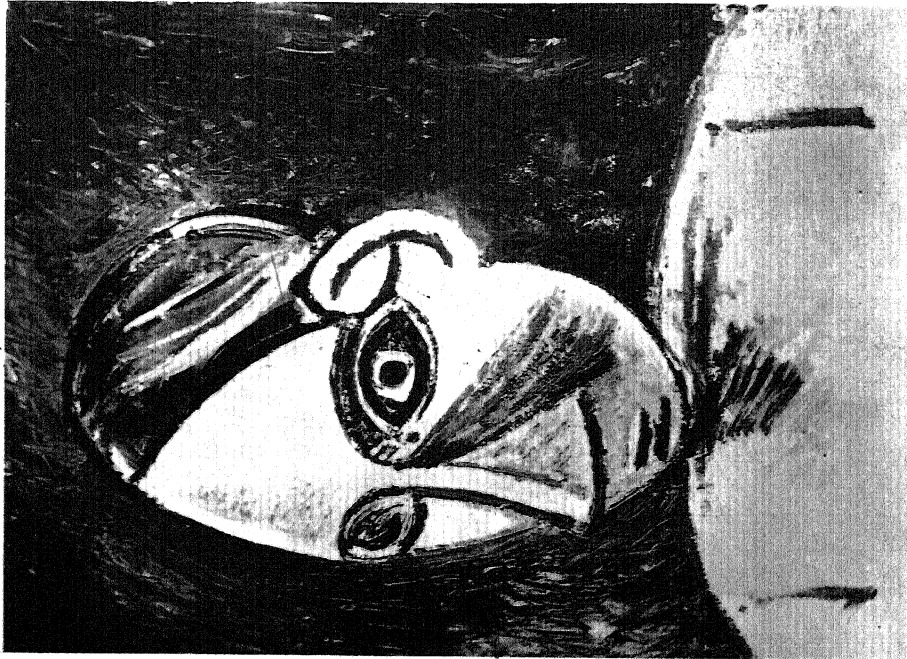


Photo. Courtesy Galerie Simon

Fig. 33 PICASSO: Self-Portrait, 1907

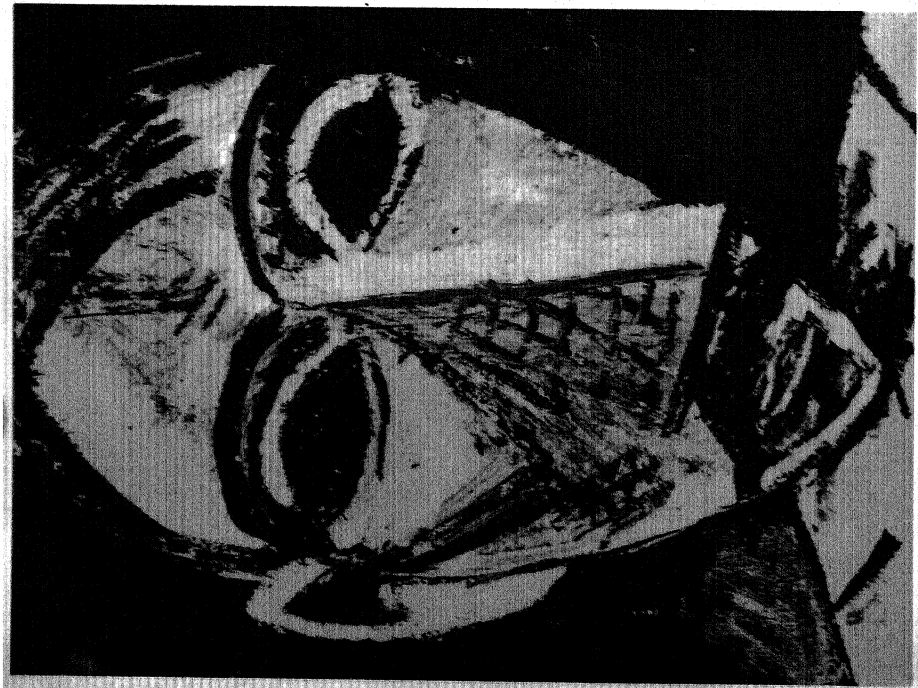


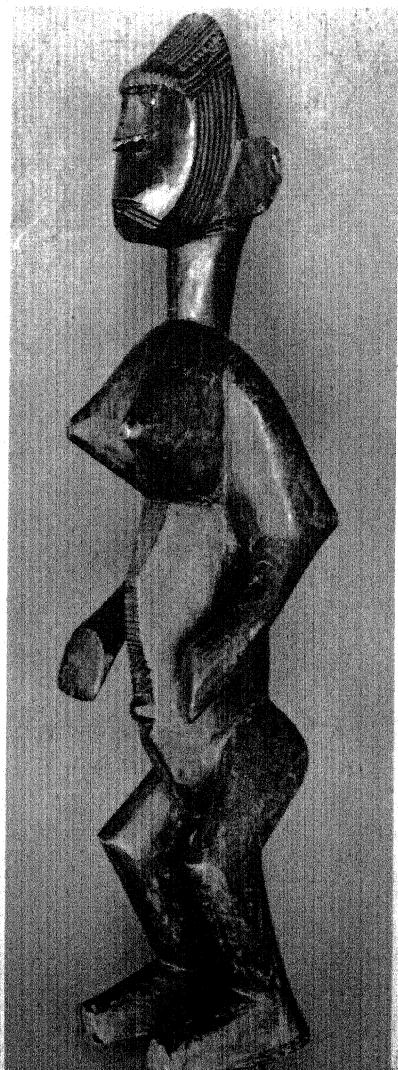
Photo. Courtesy Galerie Simon

Fig. 32 PICASSO: Head, 1907



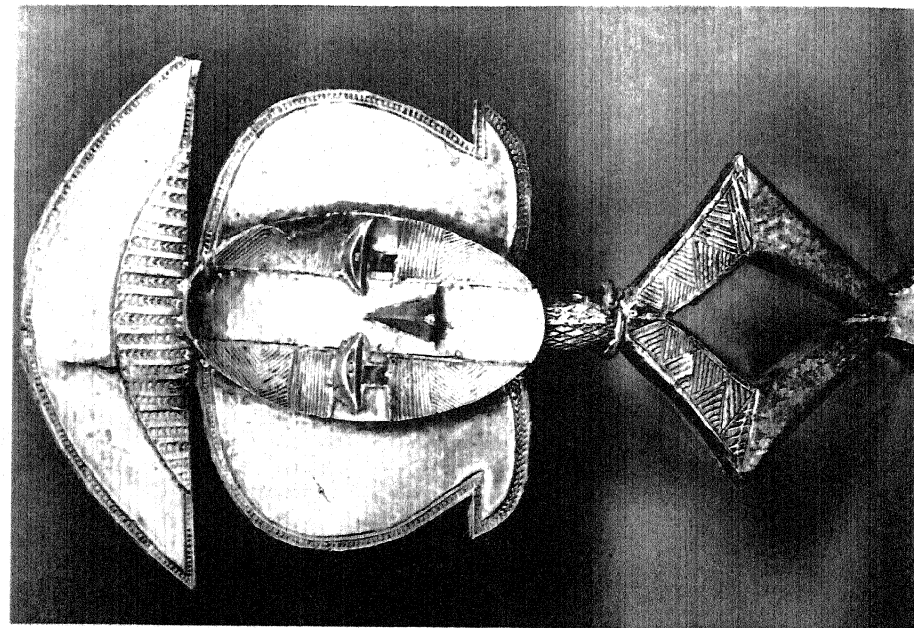
Photo. Courtesy Galerie Simon

Fig. 34 PICASSO:
Nude. 1907



Paris: Paul Guillaume Collection (formerly)
Photo. Walker Evans

Fig. 35 IVORY COAST,
SENUFO: Figure



New York: De Hauke Collection Photo. Walker Evans
Fig. 37 BAKOTA: Ancestral Figure



Photo. Courtesy Valentine Gallery
Fig. 36 PICASSO: Dancer, 1907-08



Paris: Guillaume Collection (formerly)

Fig.38 PICASSO: Study for the Young Ladies of Avignon, 1907



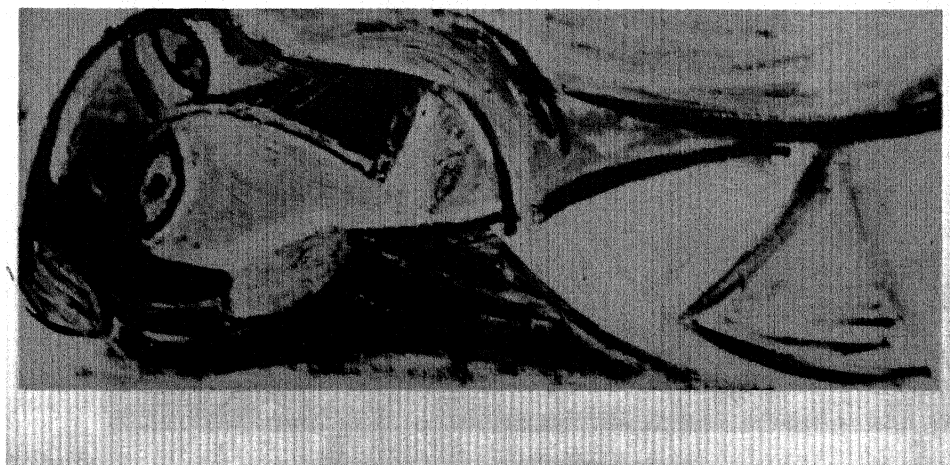
Fig. 39 PICASSO: The Young Ladies of Avignon. 1906-07

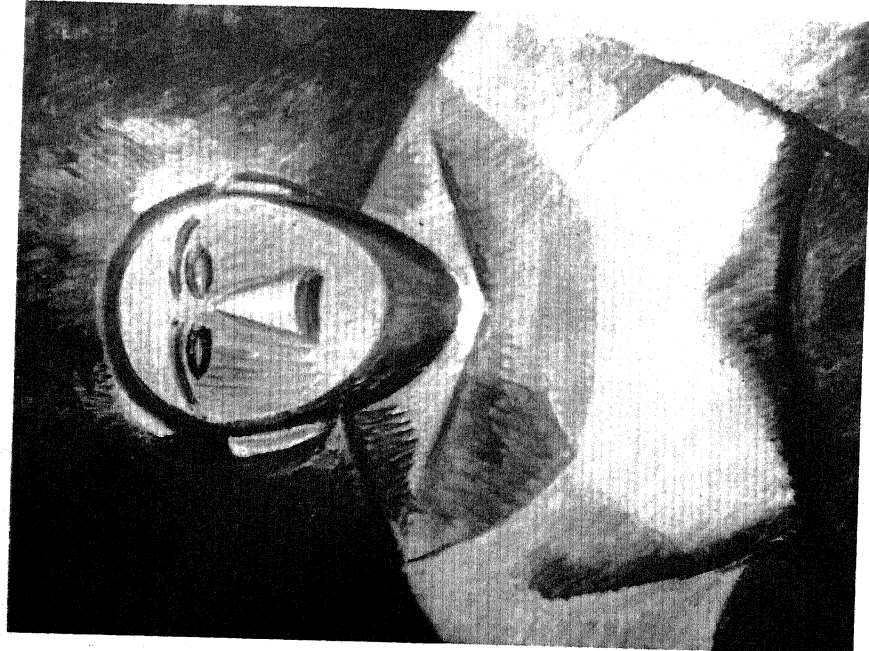
New York: Museum of Modern Art



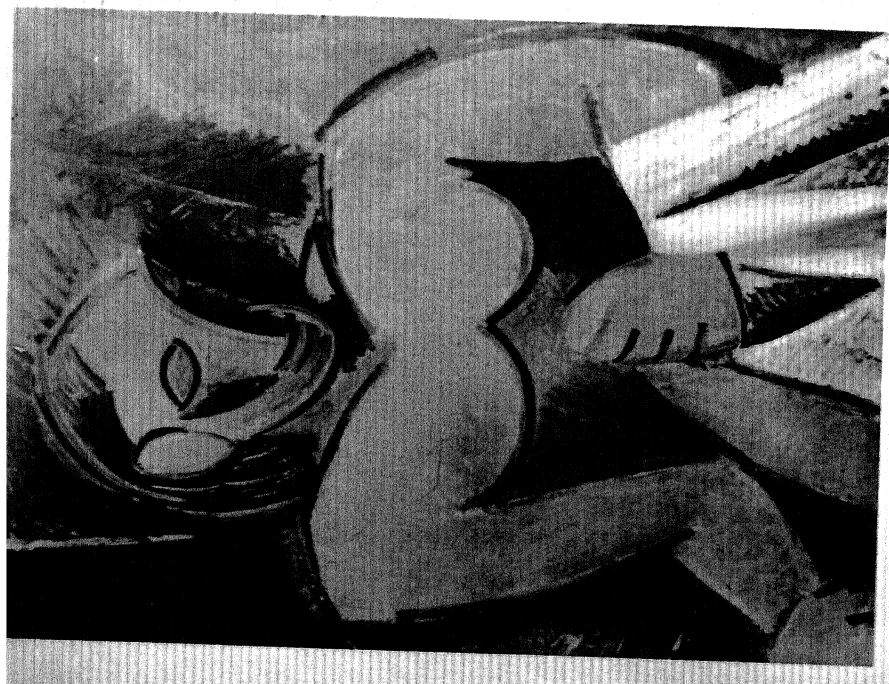
Fig. 40 PICASSO:
Study for the Young
Ladies of Avignon.
1907

Fig. 41 PICASSO:
Two Nudes.
1908





Moscow: Museum of Modern Western Art
Fig. 43 PICASSO: The Farm Woman, 1908



Moscow: Museum of Modern Western Art
Fig. 42 PICASSO: Woman with a White Towel, 1908

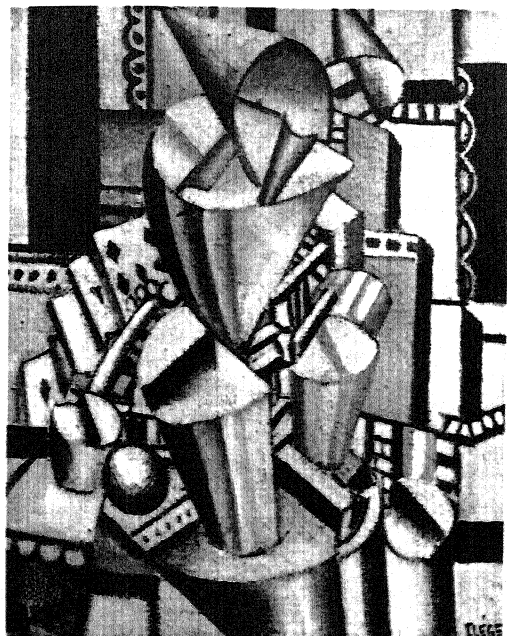


Fig. 44 LÉGER:
The Clown, 1918

Photo. Courtesy J. J. Sweeney

Fig. 45 LÉGER:
Negro Ballet (sketch), 1923

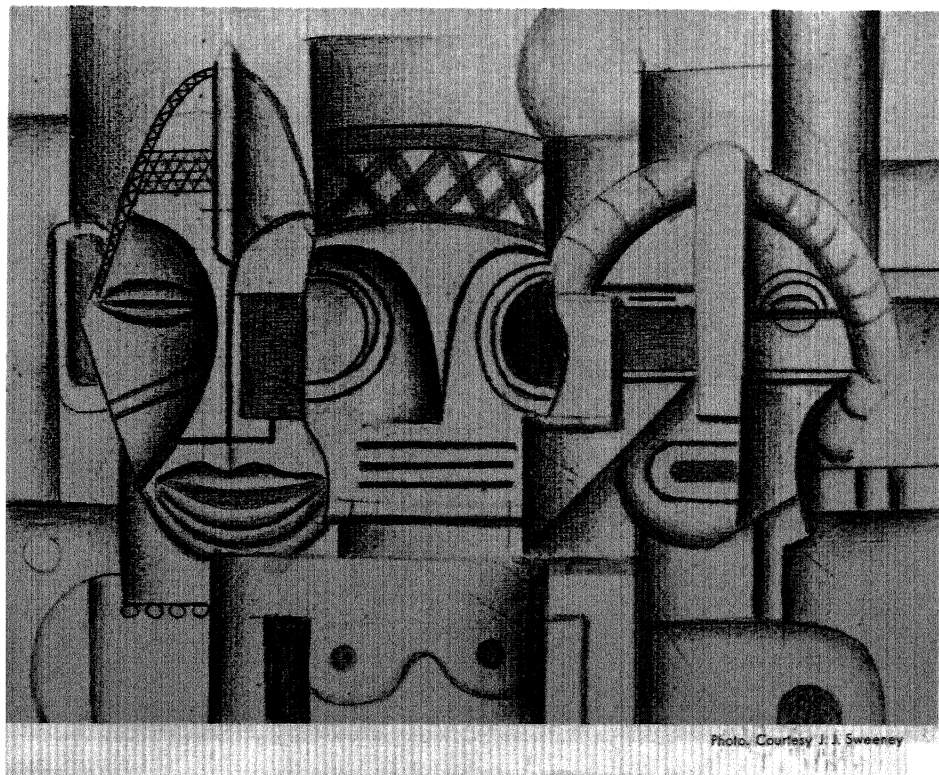


Photo. Courtesy J. J. Sweeney

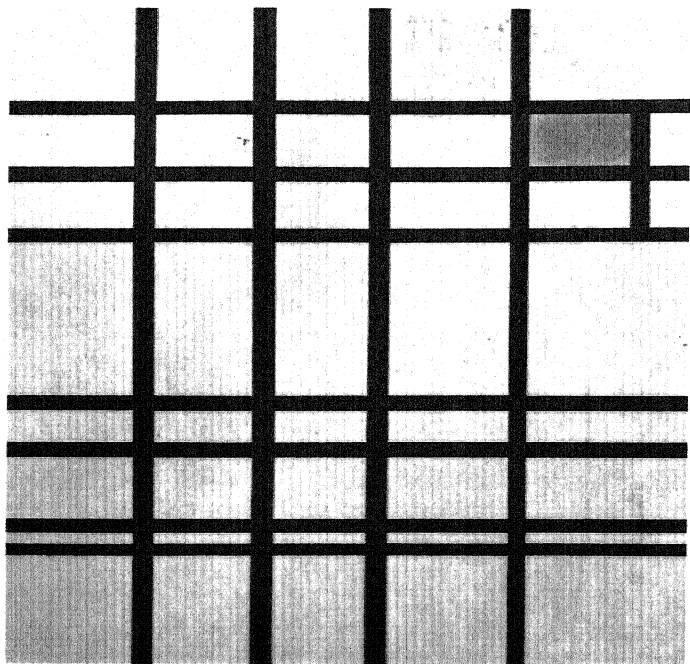


Photo. Courtesy J. J. Sweeney

Fig. 46 HERBIN: Abstraction. 1932

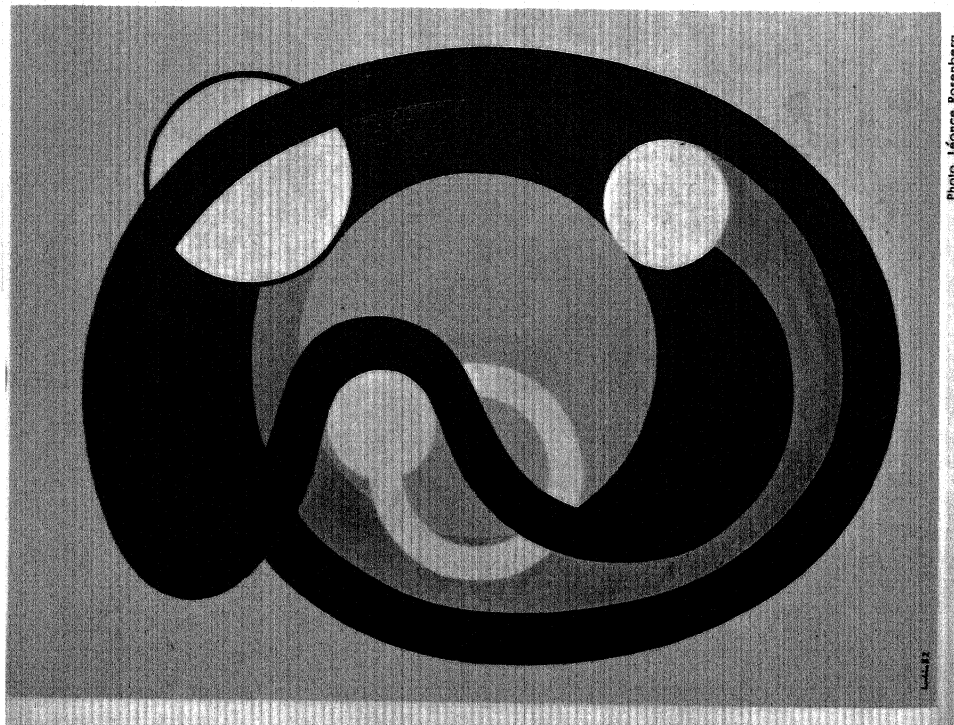


Photo. L. Anna Brechtman

Fig. 47 MONDRIAN: Composition. 1937

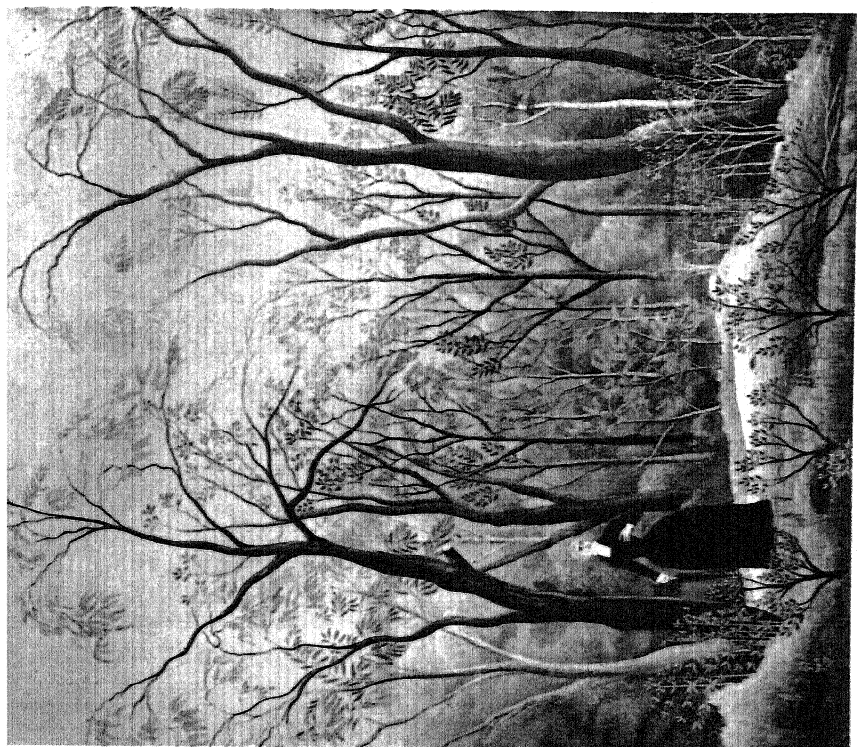


Fig. 49 ROUSSEAU; Woman in Brown in the Forest
Photo. Courtesy Harriman Gallery

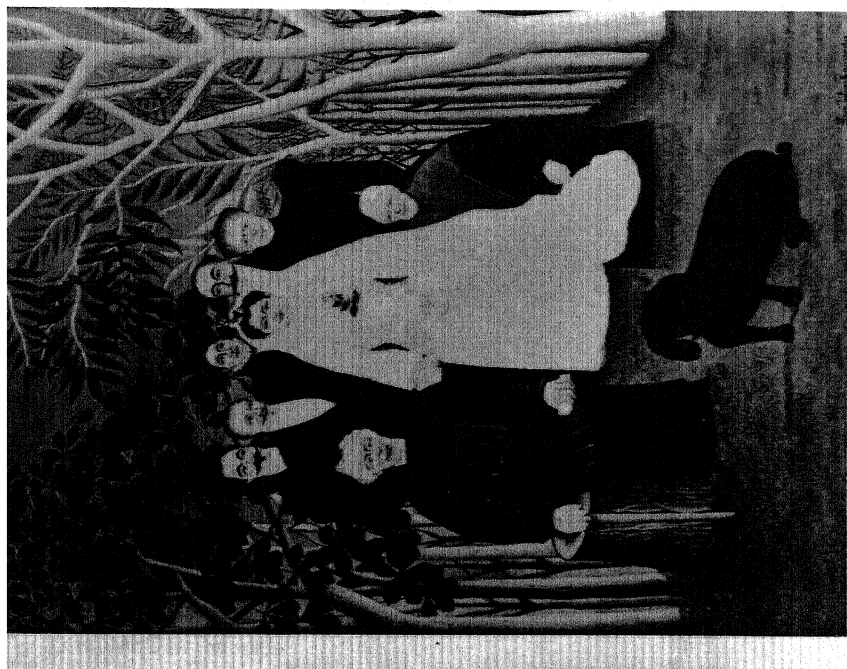


Fig. 48 ROUSSEAU; The Marriage, 1904
Paris, Mme. Paul Guillaume Collection Photo. Giraudon



Fig. 50 ROUSSEAU: The Dream. 1910

New York: Sidney Janis Collection

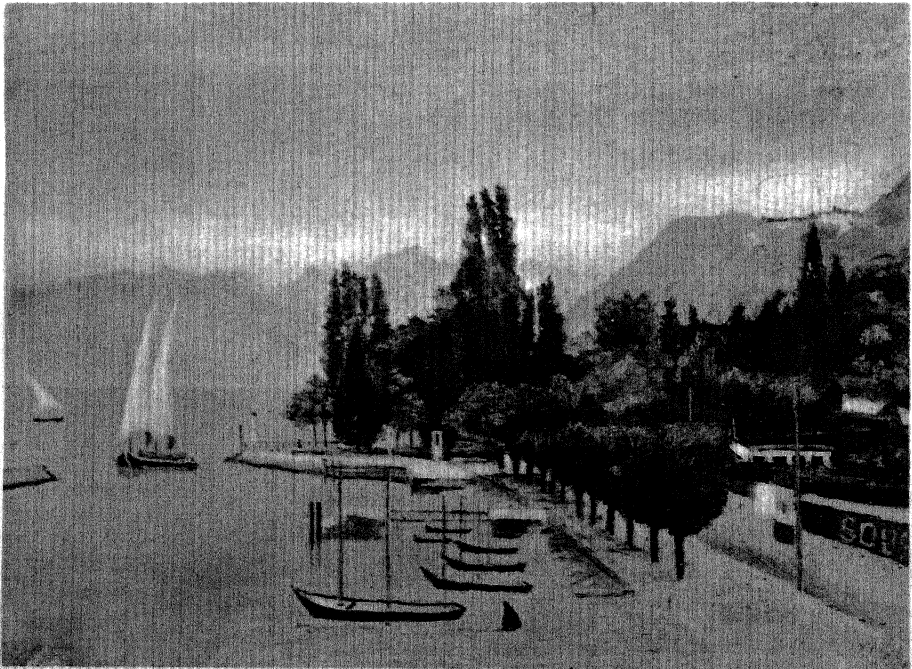


Fig. 51 ROUSSEAU: Lake Lemán

Boston: John T. Spaulding Collection

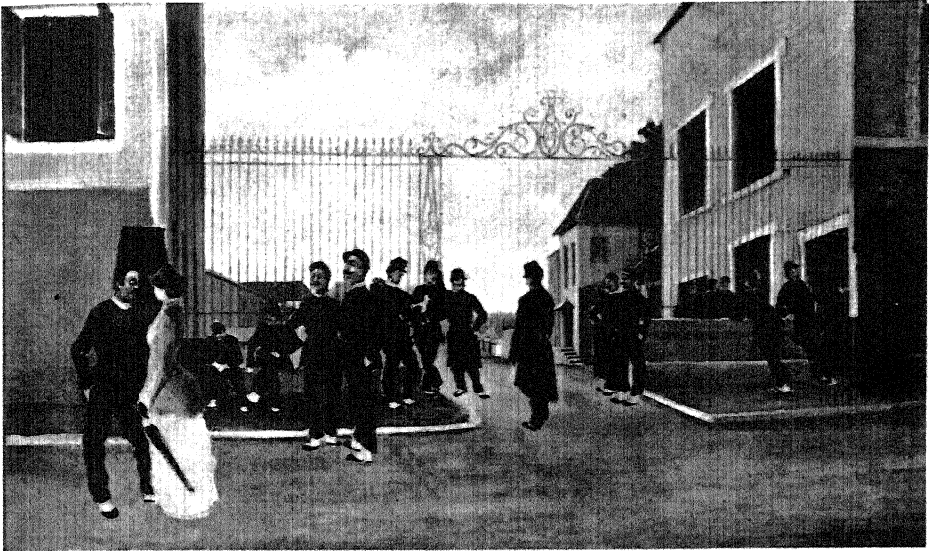


Fig. 52 ANONYMOUS XIX CENTURY PAINTER: The Barracks

Paris: Walters Collection

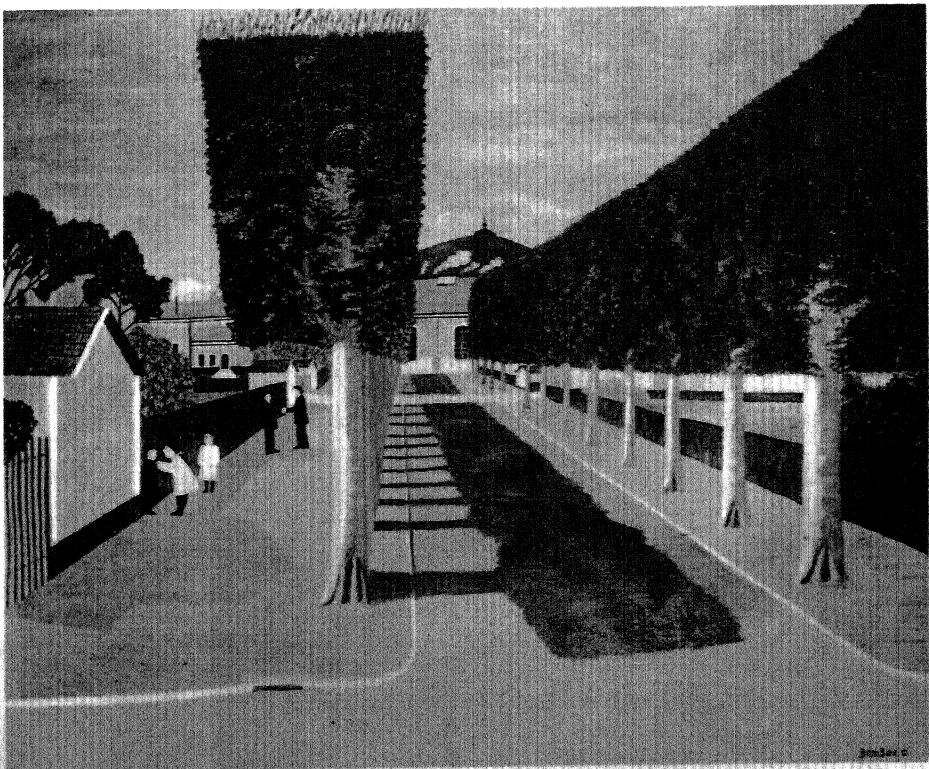


Fig. 53 BOMBOIS: The Allée

Paris: Mme. Paul Gregory Collection

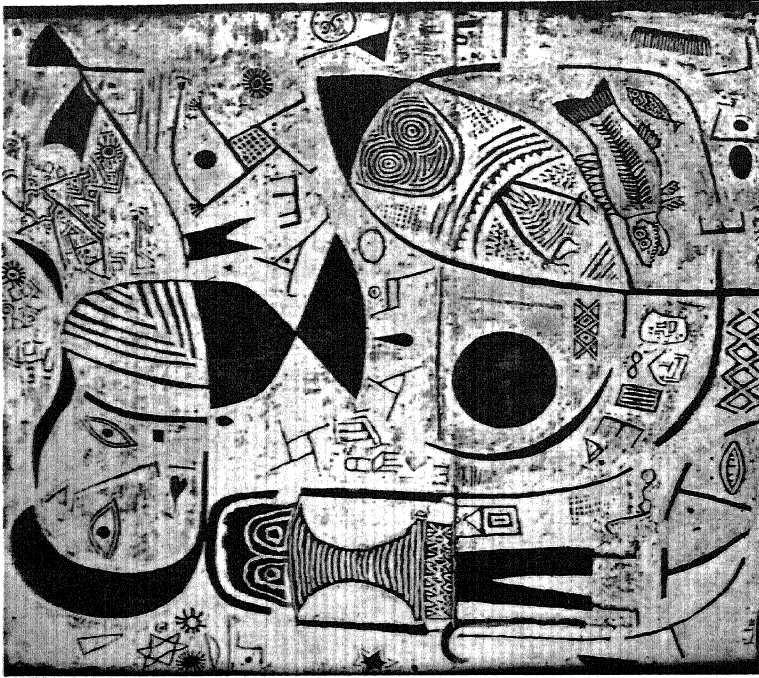
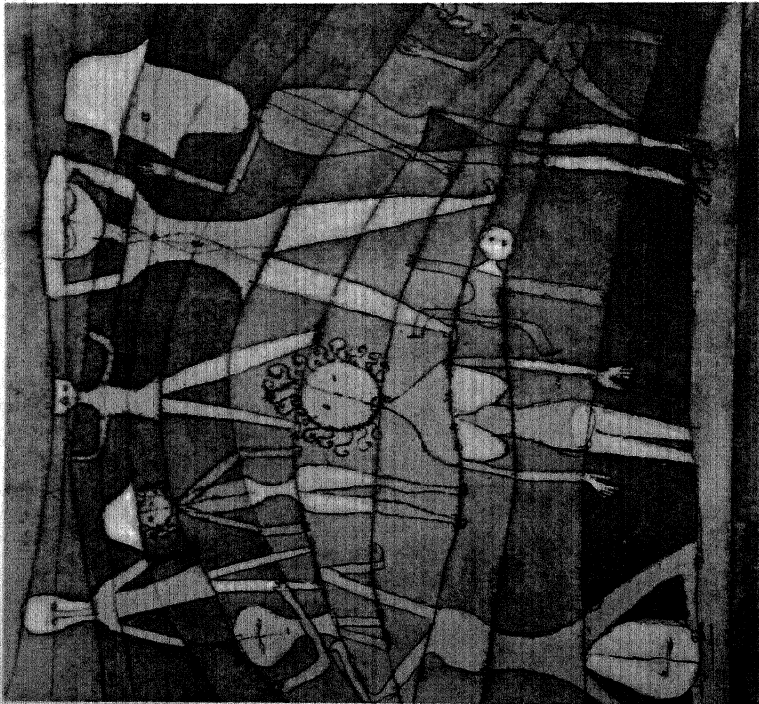


Fig. 55 KLEE: Sheet of Images. 1937



New York: J. B. Neumann Collection

Fig. 54 KLEE: Acrobatic Act. 1923

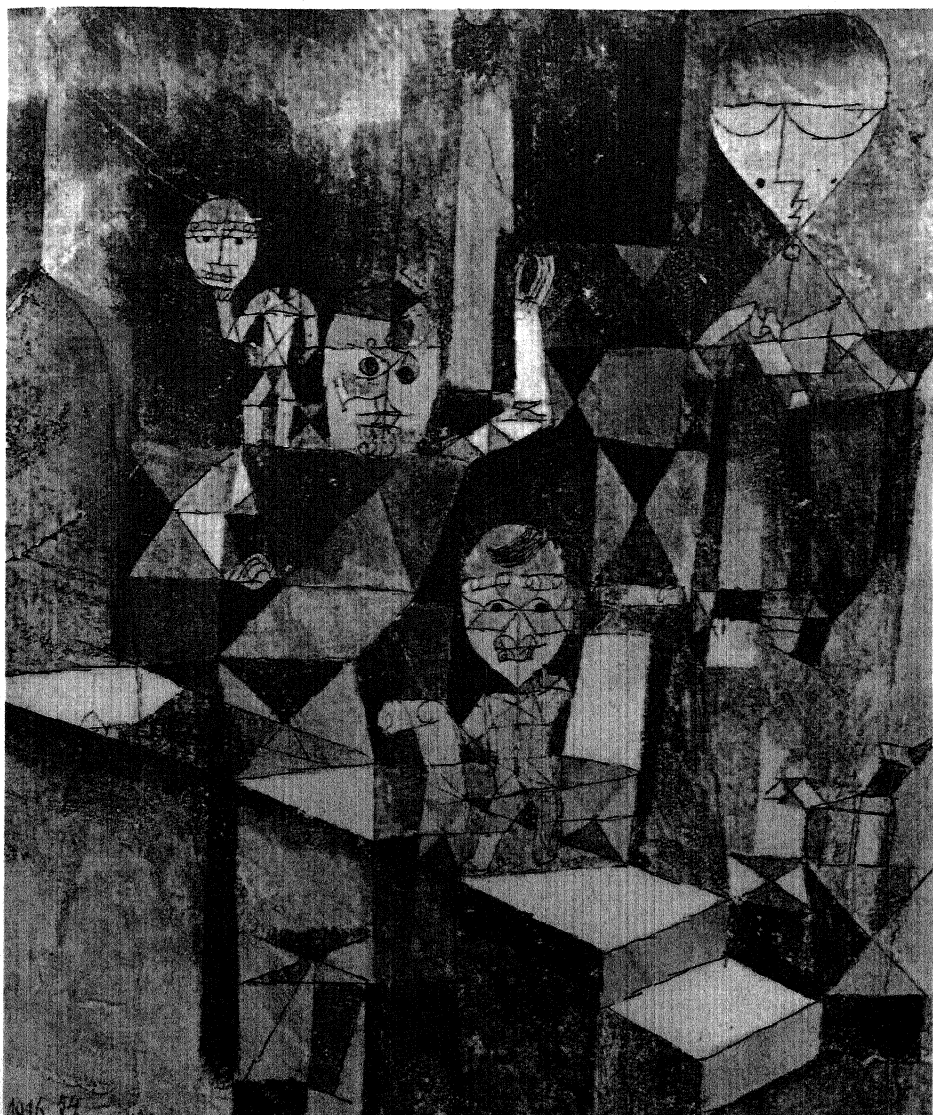


Fig. 56 KLEE: Introducing the Miracle. 1916

Photo. Courtesy J. B. Neumann

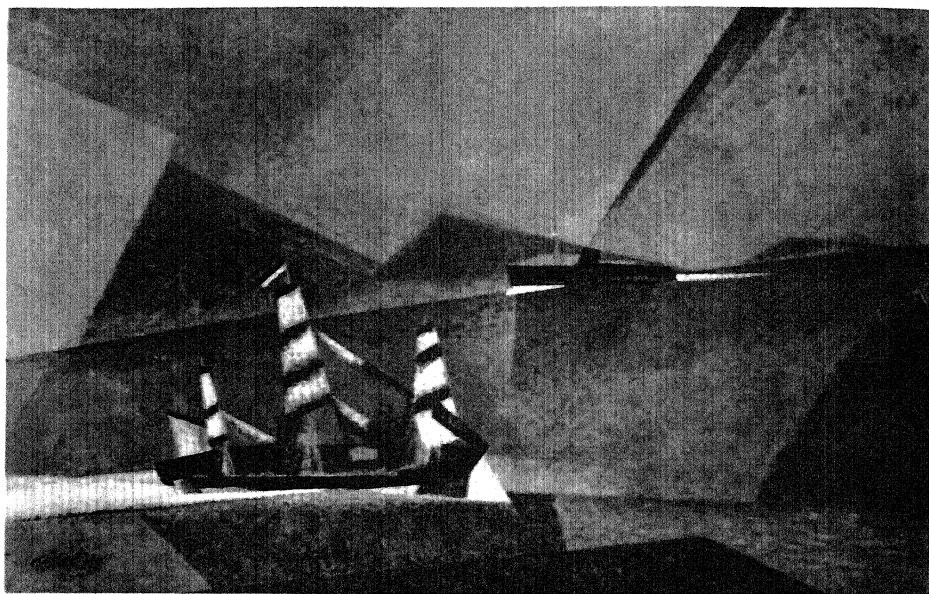


Fig. 57 FEININGER: Ships

Photo. Courtesy Nierendorf Gallery

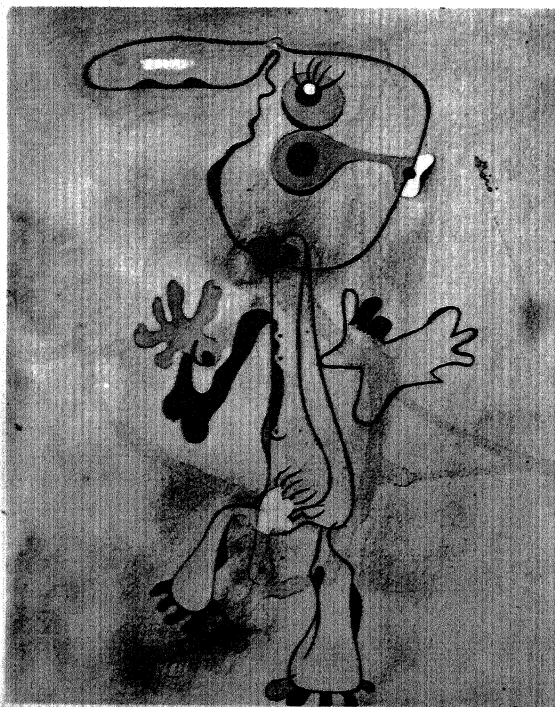


Photo. Courtesy Pierre Matisse Gallery

Fig. 58 MIRO: Personnage (gouache), 1935

CHAPTER IV

EMOTIONAL PRIMITIVISM

THE BRÜCKE

IN THE last chapter we dealt with the primitivism of two schools which were the first to come into direct contact with primitive works of art. Though influenced by these works, neither Gauguin nor the *fauves* assimilated their form or their spirit in any serious manner, but were content to let them be external factors determining their style only through the general formation of their taste. This exterior quality may be felt in the extreme generality of the primitiveness of both the styles; in spite of a striving for the primitive, it expresses itself in terms apart from the artist, creating a somewhat symbolic effect even in the most direct productions of the *fauves*. For this reason we have characterized their primitivism as romantic.

The artists who constituted the *Brücke* group also knew of primitive painting and sculpture. The creations of the native artists of Africa and Oceania were "discovered" by Ernst Ludwig Kirchner in the cases of the Dresden Ethnological Museum in 1904, as he recounts in his history of the group, the *Chronik der Brücke*.¹ Where Gauguin had known the Marquesas, and the *fauves* parts of Africa, the Germans, with proper thoroughness, found both Africa and Oceania at once and in a museum; and as befitted the more advanced state of ethnological collecting in their country, they immediately became acquainted with a range and variety of style which it took the French some years to discover.² Due perhaps partly to this circumstance primitive art was never regarded simply as a curiosity, as

Vlaminck largely looked upon it, but was, to quote Emil Nolde, at once "raised up to the level of art . . . pleasing, ripe, original-art."³ It is true that other primitive and exotic arts were being discovered at the same time—Chinese, Indian, Persian, and above all German wood-cuts of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; nevertheless, since as we shall see the members of the *Brücke* did little direct copying and were little interested in purely formal exercises, there is never any question of a borrowing eclecticism in their work.

An element of exoticism nevertheless remains. This is evident not alone in their admiration for Gauguin, whose art they came to know either in Germany, or, like Nolde, on trips to Paris; or in the clear imitation of Gauguin's voyages to the South Seas as well as of his painting in the work of Pechstein, the least original member and one of the later adherents of the group.⁴ It can be seen also in the subjects chosen for their pictures, and to the greatest extent in those of Nolde. *The Missionary* (1912), and *Man, Woman, and Beast* (1912), although directly inspired by Dahomey sculpture are harmonious interpretations of native life in terms of this art and show no attempt to copy its formal characteristics. Alongside of such pictures as the *Masks* (whether of 1911 or 1920), pictures composed of isolated objects hung close together as one would find them in the documentary cases of a museum, or like the *Still-life* (1915) which contains a New Guinea shield placed with other non-primitive objects, appear such subjects as the *Calm South Sea Evening* (1914), *New Guinea Natives* (1915), or the *Indian Dancers* (1915).⁵ (Figs. 17, 18.) These testify to Nolde's voyage to Russia, Japan, and the South Seas in 1913, made perhaps under the inspiration of Gauguin, but after a long familiarity with Oceanic art, and producing no such derivations as Pechstein's.⁶ The dates of the pictures are significant because they show that Nolde had no need to paint them on the spot, making native portraits or copying the decorative details of

native art as Gauguin had done, but was satisfied to transcribe his impressions and his feelings after he got back home. In the pictures of the *Masks* it is difficult to recognize the exact provenance of each object, even at times to tell whether it is African or Oceanic, and these pictures are not ethnological documents. They are not even the idealized documents that Gauguin painted, where correct details are merged into a whole that is meant to be the unspoiled essence of the primitive world, but of a world which is outside and apart from the artist, and so is also false to the native life it is meant to interpret. Rather they are the primitive in terms of the artist's own emotions, taken out of its context and put into the artist's head, and are therefore both unlocalized and immediate, a character which is most striking in the close-ups of masks and heads.⁷ The change from Gauguin's point of view is towards an interiorization of the conception of the primitive, a change whose start we have noted in the work of the *fauves*, and which we will have occasion to point out again.⁸

It is characteristic of the non-formal quality of the *Brücke's* appreciation of primitive art that in the painting of Kirchner, its discoverer, there should be no direct evidence that he knew of its existence. It is perhaps possible to see in his sculpture the influence of Cameroon figures and house decoration, the more so since Cameroon was a German colony and its art was well represented in the museums.⁹ In the *Alpaufzug* (1918), a relief in wood, there is the same method of cutting back from the original surface of the block in order to indicate modelling, creating a zig-zag profile outline, that the Cameroon sculptors used in the carving of their door posts and lintels.¹⁰ In the *Frauenkopf* (1912) the modelling of the lozenge eyes, the connection of the brows and the nose, and the projecting mouth and chin likewise recall the Cameroon technique. In Kirchner's other carved figures, however, there is a much more general primi-

tivizing effect. The *Bathers Drying Each Other* (1905), or the *Adam* (1920), for example, simply make use of a crude wood technique which recalls popular art wherever it is found, whether in primitive or advanced cultures, rather than the most characteristic work of the primitive peoples.¹¹ The use of contrasting color, which is found in the above mentioned figures and again in the *Women and Girl*, shows an approach to the primitive which is closer than that of most sculptors who have been drawn under this influence. Still affected by the idea of the beginnings of art as it was formed from an incomplete understanding of the archaic Greek, they carefully eschew the application of color and keep the surface of their work as uniform and unaccented as possible.¹² The primitive is conceived as reached by stripping off later layers of unessential accretion in order to reveal a pure homogeneous core. In reality, of course the African and the Oceanic artist employs color whenever it will heighten the intensity of his work (as did also the Greek), and does not hesitate to have recourse to a diversity of material if it will serve his purpose, combining wood with metal, shells, feathers, or cloth as he wishes.¹³ The color increases the realism of the subject, and while it intensifies, it limits the effect of the artistic conception, giving it a precision of reference which avoids the vague and undetermined symbolism which is usually connected with the primitivism of modern sculpture, but which plays no part, either in form or religious meaning, in the art of the truly primitive.¹⁴ In this sense, if not always in his formal rhythms, Kirchner comes close to the African and the Oceanic spirit.

In our discussion of the attitude of the *fauves* toward the primitive, we have remarked upon their use of the nude human figure in a wild landscape setting.¹⁵ We noted especially the union of the figure with nature, and the contrast of its lack of action with an apparent emotional savagery, combining to give the picture a symbolic quality.

Both these aspects of the *fauve* attitude, and consequently the resulting symbolism, are intensified in the work of the *Brücke* artists. The settings chosen, as with the *fauves*, are either the beach or the forest, and the figures are again given in close-up, covering nearly the entire height of the picture when they are not themselves cut by the frame. Such scenes occur very frequently in the work of Kirchner, who, through a high horizon and a lack of depth in the landscape, makes almost no compositional distinction between the two geographical classifications. This was already apparent in the *fauves'* treatment, but in their work broad areas of flatly applied color and straight lines of sea and sky emphasized the extensiveness of the sand and water, while here the more broken color areas and the interrupted contours of the objects minimize the distinction, and tend, in either case, to make the setting grip the figures. There is, for example, no difference of immediacy and expanse between the *Nude Girls at the Beach* (1912), where there is almost no sky and the figures are buried in the foliage, and the *Four Nudes under Trees* (1913), where the identical high format is used. This conception is of course not confined to Kirchner, and we may mention as other examples the *Red Dunes* (1915) of Schmidt-Rotluff, Otto Mueller's *Girls Bathing* (1921), and Heckel's *Glass-like Day* (1913). (Figs. 21, 22.)

It is characteristic of the manner of conception of these subjects that even where the views are typically northern ones, as in the scenes of beaches or sand dunes—not to mention those of woods and forests which are perhaps of a more southern nature—the effect achieved should nevertheless be that of a tropical landscape. We have already mentioned this tropicalizing in the work of the *fauves*, and here, as in their painting, it results from the effect of the proximity of the spectator to the scene rendered, his feeling that he is in immediate contact with the scene, rather than viewing it from a distance. This feeling, in its turn, comes from the close-up aspect of the objects depicted,

the apparently unfinished, random quality of their choice, and the even distribution of the composition over the canvas. These elements, present in the *fauves'* painting, are here depicted with an even greater intensity, an intensity further heightened by a darker, more saturated color scheme, and a closer juxtaposition of opposing hues. As with the *fauves* again, the violence of these pictures is due to the manner of composition of the subject, rather than any violence inherent in the subject itself. The figures are without an individual psychological character, and have no binding relationship, or common point of interest. This isolation is even indicated in the titles: The participants are no longer "bathers" whose action issues from an interior volition, they are "nudes under trees" whose meaning and whose significance lie just in the fact of their being under the trees, on the beach, or in the forest. They are to be treated as one with their setting in nature, and it is this assimilation which gives them their meaning. Even the graceful attitudes of the *fauves* figures, indicated by flowing curves and closed contours, have disappeared, and in their place there are flipper-like hands and feet which seem to terminate in and become part of the surrounding foliage.¹⁶ (Fig. 22.)

The paintings of the *Brücke* which we have discussed so far are in line with the romantic-symbolic attitude toward nature and toward the primitive in its union with nature that we have seen in Gauguin and in the *fauves*. In Gauguin the type of scene we have been considering was definitely exotic; with the *fauves* it was unlocalized; but the painters of the *Brücke* attempt, unsuccessfully perhaps, to bring to their northern home these equatorially conceived landscapes. They are reinforced in this tendency by the other aspect of their primitivism, an aspect which is more particularly northern in character, and which stems from northern prototypes. This side of the primitivism of the *Brücke* is directly emotional, attempting the portrayal of violent emotions and passions in as outspoken a manner

as possible. The scenes which are rendered are not simply pleasant views painted with purely pictorial concerns in mind, they are thought of as having some connection with the fundamentals of human life and destiny; they may vary in type and character but there is always an attempt to bring into conscious prominence the essential emotion behind the accidental physical setting.

Apart from the landscapes we have discussed and the portraits to which we will come, the two most frequent kinds of subjects painted by the *Brücke* artists are cabaret and music-hall scenes and scenes from the Bible. Superficially these have nothing in common, nevertheless both furnish an opportunity to depict emotion at a level of intensity which is rarely reached in the ordinary routine of daily events. In such a picture as Heckel's *Clown and Doll* (1912) the individuality of the figures, the existence of the actors as separate human beings, has almost disappeared in favor of the purely typical roles which they are playing. (Fig. 17.) Their relation is made symbolic of a type relation, of a basic human situation. The figures are of course themselves types, but the lack of modelling, the stiffness of gesture, and the compulsory absence of facial expression emphasize still further their lack of individuality. Elsewhere, when such a clear symbol cannot be chosen, the particular, separate character of the subject is done away with by similar means. Above all the faces are never individualized, the features being given as large unmodelled spots of color within the area of the head. Often, as in the *Comedy* of Nolde, it is impossible to tell whether certain of the characters are wearing masks or not, and the undetermined quality of the picture, and its power of evoking meanings beyond itself is thereby greatly enhanced.¹⁷

Such a picture as the *Comedy* recalls, in the caricatures of the faces, the vertical alignment of the figures, and the indefinite haze from which the figures emerge with a certain ghostlike quality, the work

of James Ensor.¹⁸ There is, however, this difference, that Ensor's atmosphere is wholeheartedly of another world, whether of the spirit or of the dream, while here this world has not been completely exorcised. The result is that while one is at times not quite sure whether caricature is not intended, the terrible quality of these pictures, their hinting at some underlying, basic reality which would be awful if it could but break through in its full power, is much greater than in the work of Ensor. On the other hand, some of the subjects painted by these artists, particularly Kirchner's scenes of *cocottes*, of brothels, and of the *variétés*, recall Toulouse-Lautrec's treatment of the same type of life.¹⁹ With the French artist, however, the tragedy, whenever it is portrayed, is a personal one, and it is the contrast of the individual and the role that counts, so that the superficially amusing elements must always be kept in mind. Kirchner, not bothering with the reality of tinsel charm, immediately does away with the surface qualities, and brings into play (in a manner that foreshadows the later work of George Grosz) the underlying forces of human nature and of society that determine the particular situation which he is rendering. In other words, he is plumbing deeper, more primitive depths, than either of his predecessors.

It is in this sense also that the religious scenes must be interpreted. They are attempts to bring out the essential, the inner quality of the story, getting rid of everything but the concentrated expression of violent emotion. The hierarchical, the churchly surface is stripped off, and a return is made to a primitive Christianity. For we must recognize here, in spite of the tremendous formal and emotional distance which separates them, an attitude toward religion akin to that of the Nazarenes and the Pre-Raphaelites.²⁰ The idyllic quality of the latter, the archaizing simplification which preponderates over all realism of detail, is here replaced by a simplification of technique

and an omission of all detail which neglects nuances and overtones for a single, undifferentiated, overwhelming emotional effect. Nolde's *Entombment* (1915), through the crowding of its composition, the concentration of its modelling on the closely juxtaposed heads with their large features, and the reduction of these heads to the expression of a single, dominating emotion, becomes a thing of immediate terror. In *The Last Supper* (1909) individual reactions and *affetti* are neglected, and a single group emotion, terrible and wonderful, unites all the figures in one sweeping whole. A similar concentration ties together the series of the life of Mary of Egypt. (Fig. 19.) Where the nineteenth century strives to reach emotional truth by ridding itself of historical and geographical accretions, the twentieth takes off the emotional additions in a direct fashion, finding the basic layers valuable in themselves. And where the nineteenth century thought of the primitive, thus revealed, as calm and reasonable, the twentieth sees it as violent and overwhelming.²¹ These are some of the differences between the primitivism we are studying and the romanticism out of which it grew; we will return to them in our last chapter.

To a critic who told Emil Nolde that he must make his pictures much milder if he wished to sell them, the artist replied, "It is exactly the opposite that I am striving for, strength and inwardness."²² The desire which Nolde expresses in this manner comes out very clearly in the portraits, and in figure groups which are combinations of portraits, painted by all the members of the *Brücke* group. Their interest does not lie in anatomical structure or in the formal relations of cubical mass and surface light and color, but rather in the strong expression of a single dominating character. (Fig. 25.) Toward this end the features, particularly the eyes and mouth, are exaggerated and contrasted with the rest of the head, while the whole figure emerges from a background which is neither

clearly indicated nor entirely abstract in character, and which seems pregnant with possible forms. The faces are either devoid of ordinary expression, and, with fixed eyes seemingly intent upon something within, as in Nolde's *Woman and Child* (1914) or Schmidt-Rotluff's *Portrait of S.G.* (1911); or they convey a violent, uncontrolled emotion which is again the product of an interior force rather than related to the outside world, as in Heckel's *Roquairol* (1917) and his *Portrait Study* (1918) or Nolde's *Excited People* (1913).²³ (Fig. 24.) In these pictures the feeling of a basic controlling force against which there is no rational struggle remains human in its application; in others, where there is some indication of the background, it extends from the outside world so that the figures become the focus of surrounding forces. In such a picture as *Making-up* (1912), by Heckel, the silhouetting of the figures against the background, the dark forms of the figures themselves, and the bare landscape seen through the window, indicate the influence of Munch's art. (Fig. 20.) Munch himself, as we have seen, was interested in the same symbolic way as the other artists of the *Jugendstil*, in depicting the basic forces of the universe, and he added a violence of emotion that was lacking in the more decorative work of other men.^{23a} However, he connects emotional violence and the imminent forces of the surrounding atmosphere only with the recognized basic and crucial situations of human life, whereas in the work of the *Brücke* group they are continually breaking through, no matter how trivial the person or the place.

In our analysis of the pictures to which we have referred, we have noted the simplification of form, its definition within simple contours, and the elimination of nuances of modelling and variegations of surface which might detract from the single immediate impression that the artist wishes to convey. To a certain extent such a formal reduction must be accompanied by a similar technical simplification,

and at the start of any such process it may be impossible analytically to separate the two. Where finesse of line, for example, is used to depict simple, or simplified forms—as in some of the drawings of Picasso—the result, far from being simple, is one of extreme sophistication. In the work of the *Brücke*, however, there is a deliberate coarsening of technique whose beginnings we have already seen among the *fauves*, and an emphasis upon this coarsening, which goes far beyond any such necessity. The *fauves* made use of thick, unfinished line, but Kirchner reworks his outlines in different colors, leaving the various lines all of an equal strength and not picking out the final contour. In the *Portrait of Dr. Döblin* the linear contour has been blurred with pencil and crayon zigzags normal to the curve of the form, and the same conscious coarsening, whose occasional absence in other works proves it not to be a necessary part of the artists' vision, is again present in the pen drawing, *Pair in Conversation*.²⁴ Such deliberate confusion of the outline, which also occurs in some of Schmidt-Rotluff's work, is due to the influence of children's drawings, where, however, the reworking is a sincere effort to pick out the true contour.²⁵ Here the desired effect is of something unstudied, less artistically artificial and so truer to the inner qualities of the subject. To the same influences and to the wish for the same effect may be ascribed the filling in of the background of so many of these graphic portraits with an unregulated scribble that again resembles the work of children and that indicates clearly the value given to the preparatory and the unfinished.²⁶

It is natural that an attitude such as this should create an interest in modes of artistic production which not alone permit but force a crudity of finish and technique. The great popularity of the woodcut and the linoleum-cut among the members of the *Brücke* group is due to the opportunity that these media give for bold, uncomplicated effects of the sharp contrast of large and undifferentiated areas

of light and shade. (Fig. 20.) Gauguin, as we have seen, was fond of the wood-cut for the same reasons, and even chose to simplify the primitive motives from which he largely borrowed. The wood-cuts of Kirchner and Schmidt-Rotluff are influenced rather from the "primitive" German wood-cuts of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as is evident not alone in the technique but also in the prevalence of religious subjects.²⁷ It is significant that the refinement, or rather the lack of refinement, of technique which is used corresponds to a rather early stage in the development of the wood-cut, and that the modern artists prefer to reduce the possibilities of even so limited a medium.²⁸ The tortured aspect of both styles is due rather to a correspondence in artistic situation—a correspondence which made the technical borrowing possible—than to a direct copying of the earlier style by the modern artists. The linoleum-block is of course the child's medium *par excellence*, and the interest in the artistic education of the child which grew so rapidly in Germany in the first decade of this century had given rise to its wide use in schools and art classes.²⁹ Its use by the *Brücke* group is further proof not alone of the kind of aesthetic primitivism which we have shown to be one of the chief aims of their painting, but of a direct influence from the art of children. (Fig. 23.)

What, then, are the distinguishing marks of the primitivism of the *Brücke* group? There is in the first place an influence from three kinds of art which were considered primitive—African and Oceanic Sculpture, German wood-cuts, and children's drawing. The discovery and the interest in Oceanic sculpture marks an extension in the appreciation of the arts of primitive cultures, and also a change towards a more emotional consideration. Secondly there is an influence from three artists whom we have seen to be, each in his different fashion, primitivizing themselves—Gauguin, Ensor, and Munch. But the chief characteristic of the primitivism of these

artists is a tendency to call all the refined and complicated aspects of the world about them superficial and unimportant, and to attempt to get behind these to something basic and important. Their main interest lies in the bases of human character and conduct, and these they conceive as violent and somewhat unpleasant, attempting to express them by simplifications of form and contrasts of color. The "expressionist" character of their art (a term which we have thus far purposely avoided) lies in the thoroughness and the narrowness of this interest, rather than in any purely optical difference from "impressionism."³⁰ There has been some discussion as to whether primitivism is an essential component of this art, or whether it is the result of the desire for a maximum of emotion and the wish to penetrate to the essence of things.³¹ On this point there can hardly be any question. The maximum of emotion has not always been conceived in terms that necessitated formal simplification or the reduction of technical means, as witness the baroque. Nor has the essence of things been thought of as being reached by penetrating, as it were, downward and into the depths. It is just because the search for these qualities takes the form that we have examined that we may characterize the art of the *Brücke* as primitivizing. Our study of Gauguin and of the *fauves* has shown that this is not the only manner in which primitivism can manifest itself. In spite of certain exotic tendencies, the *Brücke* artists are influenced by arts which are less outside their tradition and create symbols from elements—personal and social—which are closer to their own lives than any of their predecessors. The symbols thus become of greater force and of wider application, but, just because they are less objective, may also become more vague; and into such vagueness, mistaken for generality, any meanings can be read. We will see, in the work of the artists of the *Blaue Reiter*, how such a desire for universal meaning can transform the nature of their art.

The Primitivism of the *Brücke*

¹ Was published privately in 1916, while Kirchner was at Davos. Not available for consultation, but cf. Huyhe, René (Editor), *Histoire de l'art contemporain. La peinture* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1935), p. 429.

² Cf. Chapter I, Part I, p. 3. The quality of objects in the German museums was well above that of the pieces in French commerce until after the War.

³ Nolde, Emil, *Das Eigene Leben* (Berlin: Julius Bard, 1931), p. 158. Nolde's opinion of primitive arts in general is worth recording:

"Als etwas Besonderes, wie eine Mystik, stand vor mir die Kunst der Aegypter und Assyrier. Ich konnte sie nicht, wie damals fast allgemein, als 'geschichtliche Objekte' nur werten, ich liebte diese grossen Werke, wenn auch es war, als ob ich nicht duerfe. . . . Das folgende Jahrzehnt brachte einsicht und Befreiung; ich lernte die indische, chinesische, die persische Kunst kennen, die primitiven seltsamen Erzeugnisse der Mexicaner und die der Ur und Naturvoelker. Diese waren mir nicht mehr nur 'Kuriostaiten,' wie die Zuenftigen sie benannten, nein, wir erhoben sie zu der Kunst, die sie ist, begluckende herbe Urkunst, und das war herrlich. Der Wissenschaft der Voelkerkunde aber sind wir heute noch wie laestige Eindringlinge, weil wir sinnliches Sehen mehr lieben als nur das Wissen. Auch Bode war noch grosser Gegner kuenstlerischer Geltung des Urprimitiven."

⁴ Cf. Huyghe, *op. cit.*, p. 431. Pechstein's voyage was in 1914. Pechstein's work also has in it many other influences: Matisse, Van Gogh, and the cubists. Directly influenced by Gauguin was Paula Modersohn, in Paris in 1903; she follows both his formal simplifications and his romantic-symbolic painting of peasant types. The Worpswede community of which she was a part has many primitivising elements.

⁵ Nolde, *op. cit.*, pp. 143-45. Nolde's preferences, Courbet, Millet, Manet, and his dislikes, the eighteenth century, the impressionists, are characteristic.

⁶ See also *Still-life (Mask, Head, and Green Animal)* (1913), where the mask and animal are perhaps African; and *Strangeness* (1923), where there is New Guinea influence in the bird-like features of the faces.

⁷ This character occurs also in the portraits, as, *Artists* (1919), and *Young Couple* (1920).

⁸ See below, section on the *Blaue Reiter*.

⁹ The kind of sculpture and masks appearing in Nolde's work is that of German New Guinea (*Strangeness*, 1923). Two of the pieces in *Masks* (1920) are from the Cameroon. Two pieces of sculpture, Schmidt-Rottluff's *Head* and Pechstein's *Squatting Figure*, show a knowledge of the forms of Baluba (Congo) heads and masks.

¹⁰ Cf. the carved posts and lintel now in the Berlin Museum, reproduced in Sydow, Eckhart von, *Die Kunst der Naturvoelker und der Vorzeit* (Berlin: Propylaen-verlag, 1923), Plate 116.

¹¹ The best work of the primitive peoples is, on the contrary, characterized by a careful attention to surface and a high state of finish, since the details have precise iconographic significance.

- ¹² Note the work of Brancusi, of Derain, of Maillol, of Modigliani. Epstein's variations are purely of texture.
- ¹³ On the Ivory Coast and in the Cameroon metal and wood are combined; in the Cameroon beads and wood; elsewhere in Africa shells and wood. The most diverse combinations of Oceania are those of New Britain and New Ireland.
- ¹⁴ This precision of reference is not often realized by the modern connoisseur; the art of the Bakuba and of Easter Island are examples. Here, as elsewhere, full knowledge might detract much from our present appreciation.
- ¹⁵ See above, Chapter III, The Fauves.
- ¹⁶ Cf. Schmidt-Rottluff's *Moonlight* (1919), *Women in Greenery* (1919), etc.
- ¹⁷ The same vague mysterious quality is present in such pictures as Nolde's *Child and Large Bird* (1912), and *Strange Conversation* (1916).
- ¹⁸ See above, Chapter II.
- ¹⁹ Compare Heckel's *Dying Pierrot* (1912) with its squeezed mannerist composition, and its relation to a *Descent from the Cross*, with any French work.
- ²⁰ At its inception, the *Brücke* also attempted a similar association of its artists as had the Nazarenes and the Pre-Raphaelites. The Worpswede group also tried to set up a community.
- ²¹ Both, nevertheless, go back to what they consider the human qualities at the base of their religions.
- ²² Nolde, Emil, *Jahre der Kämpfe* (Berlin: Rembrandt-verlag, 1934), p. 44.
- ²³ It is interesting to compare these portraits with Gericault's studies of mad people where the interest is in the formal qualities to which madness has given rise; here the interest has been reversed.
- ^{23a} Munch's first success came with the *Secession* of 1902. In 1906 he did the decorations for Ibsen's *Ghosts*, produced in Berlin by Reinhardt. Cf. Glaser, Curt, *Munch* (Berlin: B. Cassirer, 1917), pp. 36, 67.
- ²⁴ Cf. *Potsdamer Platz* (1913), *Fünf Frauen in der Strasse* (1913) and *Lungernde Mädchen* (1911) where this technique has been used, and contrast these with the drawings: *Zwei Mädchen im Hause* (1906), *Trauriger Kopf* (1906), where the contours have been picked out with a single line.
- ²⁵ Cf. *Moonlight* (1919). The influence of children's methods of composition also appears: *Fishermen with a Boat* (1919).
- ²⁶ Cf. the preface to the *Berliner Sezession Schwarz-Weiss Ausstellung*: November, 1911:
 "Wir wollen im Gegenteil (to position that only recognizes the 'deutlich zu Ende geführte') auch all das Künstlerische und Interessante, was in den ersten Entwürfen und Studien . . . liegt, an die Öffentlichkeit bringen. So haben wir das Publikum gelehrt, der Kunst in ihren ersten Stadien der Entwicklung . . . nachzugehen und sie zu beobachten."
- ²⁷ Cf. Kirchner, *Chronik der Brücke*, in which he mentions German fifteenth and sixteenth century wood-cuts as having been part of his artistic education. Quoted Huyghe, *op. cit.*, p. 429.

- ²⁸ The idea that simple effects which do not approach those of other media are "proper" to the wood-cut is in itself a modern idea; older artists developed all the possibilities of detail. The whole attitude of simplicity due to "truth to the material" (to be found also in modern architecture and sculpture) has certain primitivist implications.
- ²⁹ Ricci, C., *L'Arte dei Bambini* (Bologna: , 1887) was translated into German in 1906: *Die Kinderkunst* (Leipzig: 1906), and this was the beginning of much interest in the artistic education of children; notable experiments were in Munich. Cf. Eng, Helga, *The Psychology of Children's Drawings* (N. Y.: Harcourt, Brace, 1931).
- ³⁰ Marzynski, Georg, *Die Methode des Expressionismus: Studien zu seiner Psychologie* (Leipzig: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1921), pp. 39-41. Marzynski divides all art, from that of children on, into the "copying" and the "symbolic."
- ³¹ Allesch, G. Johannes von, "Die Grunkraefte des Expressionismus," *Zeitschrift fuer Aesthetik und Allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, XIX (1925), 112-120. And Dessoir, Max, *Appendix* to the above, pp. 118-119.

"Zunaechst scheint mir, dass der Herr Vortragende nicht genuegend die dem Expressionismus eigne Rueckkehr zur Primitivitaet betont hat. Diese Rueckkehr ist ja nicht dadurch bedingt, dass die Formen-und Farbengebung der Primitiven besonders ausdruckskraeftig ist, sondern sie Entspricht dem Drange, der sich auf vielen Gebieten unseres gegenwaertigen Lebens bemerkbar macht: Wurzelhaftigkeit, Urspruenglichkeit, unverstuemelte Erlebnisfaehigkeit zurueckzuerorben. Dieses Streben nach Urspruenlichkeit liegt den von Herrn v. Allesch hervorgehobenen zwei Hauptabsichten der expressionistischen Kunst zugrunde . . ."

Cf. also Waetzoldt, Wilhelm, *Appendix* to the same:

"Der Expressionismus kennzeichnet sich als eine romantische Bewegung durch seinen Drang zur Elementaritaet. Wieder ist das Elementare, Primitive, das Zeitlichferne und Raeumlichweite, weil es den unverstellten, reinen und starken Ausdruck zu tragen scheint, das Ziel der Kuenstlerischen Sehnsucht. Was fuer die Romantik des anhebenden 19. Jahrhunderts das Mittelalter war, ist heute Orient, Eiszeit, Bauern-, Kinder- und Negerkunst."

We will return to both the relation of primitivistic art to the primitive, and of primitivism to romanticism in the last chapter. Intensity and simplicity of emotion have no necessary connection; romanticism looks up rather than down.

THE PRIMITIVISM OF THE BLAUE REITER

In continuing our discussion of emotional primitivism we do more than move from the north of Germany to the south, and from a group which took form in 1906 to one which had its official beginnings in 1912. The painters of the *Blaue Reiter* knew a wider selection of aboriginal styles, were more conscious of their kinship with a variety of primitive and exotic arts and more articulate about

that kinship than were the artists of the *Brücke*. How closely the relation which they expressed at length in their writings was adhered to in their pictures we shall have to examine. In many respects, however, their primitivism, though it does not stem from it, continues the primitivism of the Dresden group. We have seen that in relation to the attitude of Gauguin, and to a lesser extent to that of the *fauves*, who have already expanded Gauguin's position, the elements from which the *Brücke* was influenced and the means through which it expressed its primitivism were both closer to the artist and of a wider, more general application. This double process of interiorization and expansion is further carried on by the painters of the *Blaue Reiter*, is carried, indeed (at least in this particular line of development), as far as it is possible for any modern artist to go.

The best indication of the acquaintance of the Munich group with primitive art and of their appreciation of its various manifestations is to be found in its elaborate manifesto, published in 1912, and from which the group derives its name.¹ There, in addition to examples of their own work, and of that of their French contemporaries whom they admired, we find illustrations of figures from New Caledonia, the Malay Peninsula, Easter Island, and the Cameroon; a Brazilian mask, and a stone sculpture from Mexico; a Russian folk statuette and Russian folk prints; Egyptian puppets and an archaic Greek relief; Japanese wood-cuts, Bavarian glass painting of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and German nineteenth century folk pictures; a thirteenth century head of a stone cutter, fourteenth century tapestries, and a Baldung-Grien wood-cut. In addition there are European and Arabian children's drawings and water-colors, and many popular votive pictures. Such a diverse array of arts that are considered primitive, or are for some reason, as we shall see, thought of as allied to the primitive, demonstrates an acquaintance and an education in the history of art that is far beyond

that of the members of the *Brücke*. It indicates further some principle of appreciation, which, while it may in part contain elements of the curio-collecting of Vlaminck, the violent emotional interest of the *Brücke*, or the formal apprehension of primitive style peculiar to nascent cubism, must go beyond any of these in order to unite such a diversity of artistic expression. That the selection is not simply a haphazard one is shown by the absence of any examples of arts that might be considered developed or sophisticated. We wish to discover what brings all these objects together as "primitive."

The relation which the artists of the group felt towards these examples of "primitive" art, and the manner in which they themselves judged of their appreciation, may best be gathered from extracts from their own writings. As early as 1910, before the formation of the group, Kandinsky expresses himself thus, in the book later published as *The Art of Spiritual Harmony*:

"When there is a similarity of inner tendency in the whole moral and spiritual atmosphere, a similarity of ideals, at first closely pursued but later lost to sight, a similarity in the inner feeling of any one period to that of another, the logical result will be a revival of the external forms which served to express those inner feelings in an earlier age. An example of this today is our sympathy, our spiritual relationship with the Primitives. Like ourselves these artists sought to express in their work only internal truths, renouncing in consequence all consideration of external form."²

We have already seen the essentials of this attitude in Nolde's estimate of his own aims, but this is the first time that it has been directly applied in the judgment of primitive art.³ It will have been noticed that in the illustrations of the *Blaue Reiter* children's art appears for the first time on exactly the same basis as the primitive. For though the *Brücke* was influenced by the technique of children's art, this is the first time that we find an express appreciation of its qualities and of the reasons for their importance to the modern artist. These Kandinsky explains in an article included in the *Blaue Reiter*:

"In addition to his ability to portray externals, the talented child has the power to clothe the abiding inner truth in the form in which this inner truth appears as the most effective. . . . There is an enormous, unconscious strength in children, which here expresses itself, and which places the work of children on as high (and often on a higher) a level as that of adults. . . . The artist, who throughout his life is similar to children in many things, can attain the inner harmony of things more easily than others. Christ said: 'Suffer the little children to come unto me, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'"⁴

Kandinsky points out that it is here that the roots of the "new realism" lie, because the simple and naïve rendering of the shell of an object brings out its inner values.⁵ In *The Masks*, another article in the same manifesto, August Macke expresses a similar appreciation of these arts, and the same neglect of external form:

"To hear the thunder is to feel its secret. To understand the speech of forms is to be nearer the secret, to live. To create forms is to live. Are not children creators who build directly from the secret of their perceptions, rather than the imitators of Greek form? Are not the aborigines artists who have their own form, strong as the form of the thunder?"⁶

For this reason "the art forms of the peasants, of the primitive Italians, of the Japanese, and of the Tahitians" have the same exciting effect upon the artist as if they were forms of nature, perhaps an even greater effect, because of their lively expression.⁷

To carry out in one's own work the attitude toward the art of those whom we may perhaps group together under the name of "simple" people, as it is defined in the quotations we have given, requires no superficial copying of their form or subject-matter. Rather it should find its expression in a relation of the artist to contemporary life similar to that of these other artists to their own environment. And in fact in the work of the members of the *Blaue Reiter* we find no secondary formal derivation from primitive, exotic, or archaic styles. The direct influences which are present are those of medieval religious, and of folk art. This is most evident

in the work of Campendonk, who, himself a painter upon glass, developed under the influence of votive pictures painted under glass, and of more recent peasant art.⁸ (Fig. 26.) This derivation of Campendonk's painting is shown not alone in the subjects which he chooses, scenes of the farm, uniting in their iconography the most important elements of country life—cattle, fowl, farmhouse, and church all brought into the same canvas, as in *The White Tree* (1925)—or of idyllic landscapes which bring together people and animals, as in the *Bavarian Landscape* (1925). The composition of these pictures, the disproportion of the figures and their arrangement according to importance, the placing of the figures in their broadest aspect, the perspective which puts objects above rather than behind, all indicate their relation to folk art. And the "realistic" aspect of the modelling, the careful indication of details such as the veins of the leaves and the hooves of the animals are proof of the same influence.⁹

All this means that in these pictures Kandinsky's theory of the parallel roles of the primitive and the modern artist has been considerably over-reached. In effect, the artist has attempted to lose his own personality as part of a complicated culture, and, by sinking it in his conception of those folk craftsmen whose products he admires, to reproduce (rather than to imitate) not alone their techniques but also their subject-matter and the spirit of its interpretation. We have come a long way from Gauguin's interpretation of peasant life in terms which lay outside of that life, and from his desire to render the "simple" qualities which he found in it. The artificiality of the *Brücke's* aim lies not in a misinterpretation of those qualities, natural to any sophisticated observer; but in the very idea that the artist can become other than an exterior observer of things of which he is not really a part. Yet it is the direction taken by this artificiality, rather than the artificial desire itself, which constitutes the *Brücke's* primi-

tivism. It lies in the fact that, seeking the mystical essence of the universe, these artists, instead of becoming one with the infinite, should find that essence in the simple minds of peasant folk, or at least in those whom they considered as such, and should try to interpret the world as such people interpret it.¹⁰

In the paintings of Campendonk also appear wild animals, animals shown idyllically at home in nature, at peace with each other, and with man. This is evidence of the third important influence which helped to form Campendonk's art, that of his older contemporary, Franz Marc. In Franz Marc's letters, written during his years in the German army, are indications of the desire to paint the world as it is felt by creatures other than himself. In this case, significantly, he attempts to identify his way of thinking not merely with simple human beings, but with the manner in which animals perceive and interpret the world.

"Is there a more mysterious idea for an artist, than the conception of how nature is mirrored in the eyes of an animal? How does a horse see the world, or an eagle, or a doe, or a dog? How wretched, how soulless, our convention of placing animals in a landscape which belongs to our eyes, instead of sinking ourselves in the soul of the animal in order to imagine his perception. . . ." ¹¹

No exception can be taken, says Marc, to the artistic logic of a Picasso or a Delaunay; they give their own interior world, and do not bother really to "see" the object they paint. It is not, however, the exterior of the object that counts, this is given by science.

"The most important part of a thought is the predicate. The subject is its premise. The object is an unimportant afterthought making the idea special and banal. I can paint a picture; the roe; Pisanello has painted such. I can however also wish to paint a picture: 'The roe feels.' How infinitely sharper an intellect must a painter have, in order to paint this. The Egyptians have done it. The 'rose.' Manet has painted that. The rose 'flowers.' Who has painted the 'flowering' of the rose? The Indians."¹²

It is among the Egyptians and the Indians that Marc finds affinities with what he wishes to do.

The measure of execution of such an intention is naturally difficult to judge, particularly by one who is neither beast nor artist. Purely technically, there is little which can be called its expression, nor are there any features traceable to the direct influence of primitive arts. In Campendonk's pictures there are occasional attitudes of animals which recall palaeolithic wall paintings, as in the repetition of the bent legs, the line of the back and neck, and the general silhouette character of the doe in the *Bavarian Landscape*, but in Marc's renderings there is no echo of this early art.¹³ Some influence of folk art is present, however, as witness for example the joyous cow given in broadside in the foreground of *The Cows* (1911). The chief manner in which Marc's conviction is expressed, aside from the simple fact of the concentration of most of his work on the portrayal of animals, is in the linear and formal rhythm of his pictures. The animal bodies themselves have rhythms, sometimes staccato, as in *The Apes* (1911), more usually smooth unbroken curves from one end of the body to the other, through which Marc tries to express the energy and the vitality that he conceives as the chief animal characteristics. (Fig. 28.) In *The Blue Horses* (ca. 1911) and the *Gold Horses* (1912) this curve, which extends from muzzle to hindquarters, is repeated in each animal, so that there is an impression of unity of purpose and mood that unites the members of the group; and the same continuity of spirit expressed through continuity of design proceeds from the more angular forms of *The Apes*, where the movement proceeds from one beast to the other in an unbroken pattern.¹⁴ (Fig. 29.)

But the method through which Marc's intention is most clearly expressed is by the repetitions of contour in the shapes of the animals and the shapes of the landscape. In the famous *Red Horses* (1911)

the contour of the hills in the background repeats in its rise and fall the undulations of the backs of the horses, so that, with the heads of the horses excluded, the two are practically identical. One might say, in this picture alone, with its open spaces and its clear separation of the animals from the landscape, that this is a simple method of composition such as other painters have used, and carrying with it no further intention.¹⁵ Upon the examination of other pictures, however, in which the setting is crowded in upon the forms of the beasts so that the two merge into a single rhythmical whole, or into a single movement which is the chief if not the sole formal impression of the canvas, it becomes evident that Marc wishes to convey the unity of beast and nature. In both the *Blue Horses* and *The Apes* this is so far the case that the separation of the animals from the natural forms, when it is accomplished by the observer, does not change the total formal effect of the picture, though it is indispensable for the grasping of Marc's intention. The unity is further conveyed by the identity of coloring throughout the picture, while at the same time the abstract quality and its symbolic intention are heightened by the artificiality of this coloring and its lack of relation to natural phenomena, permitting, for example, the painting of red and blue horses.¹⁶

The general trend of Franz Marc's painting in the remaining five years of his life is towards an abstract art. In view of his desire for a direct expression of inner truths, and of his judgment of man as ugly, this would not be surprising even without the influence which we know came from his fellow artists.¹⁷ It is characteristic, however, and demonstrates the connection of what Marc himself recognized as an inner constraint to the abstract with the primitivistic development we have been outlining, that he should at the same time have wished to have a close relation with the folk and with folk art. "Artists are only the interpreters and fulfillers of the will of the people," he

says, and deplores that at present the people do not want anything; while he combats the naturalistic art of the nineteenth century in order that "folk art, that is the feeling of the people for artistic form" may once again arise.¹⁸ In distinction to Campendonk, the wish for a future folk art rarely expresses itself in Marc's work by the copying of folk arts of the past. In the *Yellow Cow* (1911), and in the *Poor Land of Tyrol* (1913) with its child-like horses and abbreviated landscape symbols, something of the folk influence does come through, but these are isolated instances. Though influenced by the work and theories of his friend Kandinsky, Marc's pictures do not lose their connection with his previous artistic intentions, but rather, in the formalistic straightening of their lines, and the simultaneous breaking up of animal and landscape forms into an almost indistinguishable planar pattern, carry further the merging of the organic unit with the essential rhythms of the world as a whole.¹⁹ (Fig. 27.) This is in itself a mystical rather than a primitivistic aim, but Marc's preoccupation with animals, and his concentration upon their mystical union with the universe to the exclusion of any human subject matter justifies our emphasis upon its primitivist aspects.²⁰ In his last work, however, these aspects are increasingly confined to the meaning and intent of the pictures, which, formally, become more variegated and elaborated. Thus the most important painting of the period, the *Animal Destiny* (1913), goes far beyond any of the more naturalistic works of 1911 in the complication of its linear pattern; yet the indistinguishable intermingling of stylised animal and natural forms is meant to express the same pathetic union with the animal soul as did those pictures. That such is indeed Marc's purpose can be seen from the very titles of the *Dog Before the World* (1912), *The Fear of the Hare* (1912), and the *World-cow* (1913) where, as also in *Animal Destiny*, human longings and imaginings, and the desire for mystical oneness with the universe have been read into the animal bodies.

In patterns of color as well as in abstract design Marc's art at the time of his death was moving closer to the "objectless" painting of Kandinsky, with whom he had been in contact since 1911.²¹ In asking to what extent these first abstract "compositions" and "improvisations" of the older artist are primitivist, we must make a double distinction.^{21a} (Fig. 30.) In the first place they are not primitivist in the sense of having a simple, undivided form without interior complication and differentiation. The color harmonies are subtle, many colors are used, and the balance of lines and forms has in it several elements; lines are clean and careful and the whole is highly finished. Nor is the search for the fundamental bases of art which Kandinsky has expressed in his two books, *Ueber das Geistige in der Kunst* and *Punkt und Linie zu Flaeche* in itself necessarily primitivist.²² Others before have searched for the fundamentals of art without thereby being primitivist. There is no doubt that the line is one of the elements of art, and that the circle and the square are pervasive forms in the geometry of nature as well as of painting.²³ It is rather the emotional tenor of the analysis that Kandinsky gives, his attribution of stresses and strains to lines themselves instead of to their effect upon the beholder, the inner kinship which he established between certain lines and colors, the "spiritual" affinity between colors, temperatures, and certain states of mind, his "silent" colors and his lines which have no desire to leave their surface, which are primitivist in their tendency.²⁴ For all the intellectuality of his analysis, with its careful building up from smaller elements to a diversified superstructure and its distinctions and parallels, Kandinsky's final purpose is not alone anti-intellectual, but more than that it is opposed to the separation of emotional variations and nuances. It is not a series of romantic emotional experiences resulting from the interplay of the most elaborated and finest spun faculties of imagination and intellect for which Kandinsky is striving, but rather

the sinking and losing of the whole personality in a single emotion. The analogy of Bergsonian philosophy, to which we have referred in our discussion of the painting of the *fauves*, does not come to mind by chance in connection with an art outwardly so different:

"Reason was discovered to be incapable of grasping true reality, which one tried to penetrate with the aid of intuition. . . . Intuition permits one to see everything at once, instead of by a summation of parts. . . . Thus, in a manner analogous to that of philosophy, art hopes . . . to give absolute views, to seize the eternal."²⁵

The analogy is *à propos* here, as it was with the *fauves*, because here too the intention is to do away with "the acquired means" in favor of an appeal to fundamental elements in human nature, and to appeal to them in their undeveloped, undifferentiated form.²⁶ The quotations which we have given at the beginning of this section show that Kandinsky was not unaware of this primitivizing tendency, though he states it in the rather misleading form of an affinity with true "primitive" art. We may give one further passage:

"Just as art is looking for help from the primitives, so these men (who renounce materialistic science) are turning to half-forgotten times in order to get help from their half-forgotten methods. . . . Frau Blavatzky was the first person . . . to see a connection between these 'savages' (the Indians) and our 'civilization.'"²⁷

Much the same attribution of pathetic qualities to line and color symbols characterizes the explanations of Paul Klee's *Paedagogisches Skizzenbuch*.²⁸ In accordance with the greater influence on Klee of children's art, to which we will return in a later section, Klee's symbols remain more intellectual in that they must be grasped as individual wholes before they can be understood. Thus the arrow, important in Klee's theories and in his art, made up of a combination of lines and colors, must be seen as a unit before it can carry its message to the beholder, even though its "father is the thought."²⁹

Similarly the other symbols of air, water, and earth, simplified as they are in their rendering, correspond more closely to the child's "intellectual" grasp of them as unit meanings than do elements such as Kandinsky's which have a more direct and immediate access to the emotions of the spectator. Klee's art has also its purely mystical side, as his liking for the writing of the German romantics confirms, and as the undetermined way in which he uses his childish symbols so that they may give rise to uncontrolled reverie indicates, but the very use of these symbols, as Marc's use of animals, demonstrates a valuing of the simple as such and for itself.³⁰

With this symbolic animism, whose relation—true or false—to that of more primitive peoples was quite consciously realized by the painters of the *Blaue Reiter*, the process of interiorization and expansion of primitivizing elements is carried as far as may be along emotional lines.³¹ Beginning with a wider and more sophisticated acquaintance with exotic and primitive arts than had the members of the *Brücke* group, the artists of the Munich association have tried to unite the search for human fundamentals with a search for corresponding fundamentals in the universe outside. The primitive arts from which they draw a stimulus includes fields which are as far removed as are certain of those of the *Brücke* group, yet they also include folk arts which are closer to home than any naïve art which had thus far provided inspiration. At the same time, while their animal and folk subject matter is more specifically primitive in its limited reference, their painting is technically subtler and more complicated than either that of the *fauves* or of the *Brücke*; while the fundamental emotions to which they appeal are both vaguer and more general. The general emotional basis of human nature has replaced the specific, violent primitivizing emotions of the *Brücke*, finally resulting in a confusion between an emotional primitivizing and an emotional pantheism. Further than this, as we have seen with

the *fauves*, who arrived at much the same position by a different road, the broadening of the primitivizing base cannot go. We must therefore continue our study of primitivism among those artists who hoped to find the common denominator by intellectual means.

Notes:

The Primitivism of the *Blaue Reiter*

¹ Marc, Franz, and Wassily Kandinsky (Editors), *Der Blaue Reiter* (Munich: R. Piper, 1912). Already prepared in November, 1911; cf. Schardt, Alois J., *Franz Marc* (Berlin: Rembrandt-Verlag, 1936), p. 103.

² Kandinsky, W., *The Art of Spiritual Harmony*. Translated by Sadler, M.T.H. (London: Constable, 1914), p. 6. Written in 1910; published in German in 1912. It must be noted that Kandinsky holds that "the Primitive phase . . . with its temporary similarity of form, can only be of short duration."

³ It should be remarked that for certain types of primitive art at least—e.g. The Bakuba of the Congo, and the Maori of New Zealand—"consideration of external form" that is, the exact rendering of realistic detail, is of the utmost importance.

⁴ Kandinsky, W., "Ueber die Formfrage," *Der Blaue Reiter*, pp. 92-93

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 94. "Henri Rousseau, der als Vater dieser Realistik zu bezeichnen ist, hat mit einer einfachen und ueberzeugenden Geste den Weg gezeigt."

⁶ Macke, A., "Die Masken," *Der Blaue Reiter*, pp. 21-22. See also Biermann, G., *Heinrich Campendonk* (Leipzig: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1921), pp. 6-7.

⁷ Macke, *op. cit.*, p. 23. Cf. also, in answer to a questionnaire, Macke, "Das neue Programm," *Kunst und Kuenstler*, XII (1914).

⁸ Biermann, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

⁹ In his attempt to assimilate the folk spirit, Campendonk went to live among the Bavarian peasants, and lead a peasant life.

¹⁰ The art of Marc Chagall, admired by the followers of the *Blaue Reiter* (cf. Walden, Herwarth, *Einblick in Kunst* (Berlin: Der Sturm, 1924), *passim*), has no basis in a plastic folk tradition, though much of it is inspired by the legends of Chagall's native Witebsk, particularly those pictures painted after his return to Russia in 1917. (Fig. 30.) Its individual elements are allied rather to children's art (e.g. *The Enclosure*, 1926), combined on a personal dream basis, except where the iconography is directly given by the inspiring legend.

¹¹ Marc, Franz, *Briefe* (2 vols.; Berlin: Cassirer, 1920), I, 121.

¹² *Ibid.*, I, 122.

¹⁸ The parallels drawn between Marc's animals and those of Altamira (Paulcke, *Steinzeitkunst und Moderne Kunst* (Stuttgart: Schweizerbart, 1923), p. 40) do not seem to me to be accurate. In *The Bull* (1911) there is only the most superficial resemblance of posture. The same is true of some of Kandinsky's short-hand methods, as in *Lyrisches* (1911).

¹⁴ Other examples are *The Small Blue Horses* (1911), *The Small Yellow Horses* (1912), *The Tower of Blue Horses* (1913).

¹⁵ Nicholas Poussin is perhaps the outstanding example of the use of this method of composition.

¹⁶ The theories of color attributed to Marc by Schardt (*op. cit.*, pp. 74-77), in so far as any conscious use was made of them by Marc, derive from Kandinsky.

¹⁷ Cf. Marc's letter of April 12, 1915; quoted by Schardt, *op. cit.*, p. 140:

"Ich empfand schon sehr frueh den Menschen als haesslich, das Tier schien mir schoener, reiner, aber auch an ihm entdeckte ich soviel Gefuehlswidriges und Haessliches, so dass meine Darstellung instinktiv, aus einem inneren Zwang, immer schematischer, immer abstrakter wurde."

¹⁸ Aphorism No. 31, quoted by Schardt, *loc. cit.* Article in *Pan*, March 21, 1912, quoted by Schardt, *ibid.*, p. 104. Cf. also letter of September 8, 1911, to Auguste Macke, in which folk art is discussed as showing the artist how to unite again with the people.

¹⁹ Some examples are: *Tiger* (1912); *Doe in a Monastery Garden* (1912); *Leaping Horse* (1912); *Interior of Wood with Birds* (1913). *The Wolves (Balkanwar)* (1913), seems to be influenced by Kandinsky's *Lyrisches* (1911).

²⁰ Cf. letter of April 12, 1915, to his wife:

"Der unfrome Mensch, der mich umgab (vor allem der maennliche), erregte meine wahren Gefuehle nicht, waehrend das unberuehrte Lebensgefuehl des Tieres alles Gute in mir erklingen liess."

For a study of similar "animalitarianism" see Boas, George, *The Happy Beast in French Thought of the Seventeenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1933).

²¹ For example: *Sunrise* (1914); *Cheerful Forms* (1914).

^{21a} Kandinsky painted the first purely abstract compositions in European art in 1911. Cf. Barr, A. H., Jr., *Cubism and Abstract Art* (N. Y.: Museum of Modern Art, 1936), p. 64.

²² Kandinsky, W., *Ueber das Geistige in der Kunst* (Munich: Piper, 1912); *Punkt und Linie zu Flaeche* (Munich: Langen, 1926).

²³ For an intellectually primitivist employment of the same kind of analysis, see the following chapter.

²⁴ Kandinsky, *Punkt und Linie . . .*, Chapter I, *passim*.

²⁵ Grohmann, Will, *Kandinsky* (Paris: Cahiers d'Art, 1930), p. xvi. For a mystical feeling about their feel and look as raw material, see the Kandinsky, *Selbstbiographie* (Berlin: Der Sturm, 1913), *passim*.

²⁶ In *Punkt und Linie . . .*, p. 7; Kandinsky explains that if art is to be rescued it

will be not by going to the past, as the French have done, but by the ability of the Germans and Russians "in die tiefen Tiefen absteigen."

²⁷ Kandinsky, *The Art of Spiritual Harmony*, pp. 27-28.

²⁸ Klee, Paul, *Paedagogisches Skizzenbuch* (Munich: Langen, 1925), *passim*.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, III, 26.

³⁰ Note the influence on Klee of the German romantic Christian Morgenstern, beginning in 1911. Klee's liking for the Byzantine (trip to Italy, 1901, Ravenna) can hardly be held to be primitivistic.

³¹ For confirmation of this, *cf.* Molzahn, Johannes, "Das Manifest des absoluten Expressionismus," *Sturm*, X (1919), no. 6, p. 98:

"Die Erde bebt—schlingert—pulst drohnend den Raum.—Mächtig wird ihre Achse geworfen—da—ER—der EWIGE—ihren Leib beruehrte. Jahrhunderte—Jahrtausende verdorren vor IHM.—Sein Blut hat uns bezeichnet—nach vorn gerissen.—ER der Grosse Expressionist.— . . ."

CHAPTER V

INTELLECTUAL PRIMITIVISM

THE DIRECT INFLUENCE OF PRIMITIVE SCULPTURE

THE influences of primitive art upon modern painting, as we have studied them thus far, have not been direct formal borrowings. Gauguin employed subject-matter from the South Seas, and adapted individual figures from Indian art, and in Germany artists drew inspiration from the primitive, and painted "primitive" or naïve scenes. But with the exception of Gauguin's wood-cuts there was no study of the form and composition of aboriginal sculpture, and none of the artists we have discussed tried to reproduce its aesthetic effects. The closest approach to such an attitude that we have seen has been the relation of the *Blaue Reiter* group—notably Marc and Campendonk—to the folk art of their native Bavaria, although even here their relation was largely determined by a romantic notion of the value of popular art which was not affected by the particular form the art might take. The approach of the artists whom we have thus far considered has, in other words, been dictated by ideas concerning the primitive which made them predisposed to value the works of art because they were the products of primitive peoples as much as they appreciated the peoples through and for the art they had created. The strength of this indirect approach and the extent of its domination is well indicated by the fact that it has been possible to begin our discussion of each group by quotations from the artists themselves concerning the appreciation and value of the primitive and their ideas about it.

With the artists whom we are to consider in this section such an analysis is not possible because there is no writing with which to deal.¹ This lack reflects an attitude different from those of the men whom we have already discussed. It means that the contact with primitive art is now directly through the objects themselves, that their individual effects of form and expression are studied apart from any general ideas about the primitive outside of its manifestations in art. Their intention, indeed, was to limit themselves even within this field, and to consider only the formal aspects of primitive work, disregarding not alone its particular iconographical significance, of which they were entirely ignorant, but also the more general emotional expression, and the effect induced by the form and composition of the objects that they knew. This intention was not, as we shall see, completely carried out, and there was a more definite emotional connection with African art than the generalized "poetic suggestion" which was all that Guillaume Apollinaire (thinking in the same sort of terms as had Vlaminck), as much as ten years later, could discover in the "fetishist sculpture of the negroes."²

Picasso was introduced to negro art by Derain in the year 1906. Derain had in his turn learned of it through Vlaminck, who, as we have mentioned above, had "discovered" it in 1904.³ The range of Picasso's acquaintance with the various African styles is still a moot question.⁴ His paintings are evidence that he knew the wooden sculpture of the Ivory Coast and the metal grave figures of the Gabun. Though there are references in later writings by his close associate, Apollinaire, none too accurate in his geographic allusions, to the sculpture of the Congo, the discernible reminiscence in his art is much less conclusive evidence.⁵ He had no knowledge of the work of the Cameroon grasslands, the sculptural tradition which was the closest of any in Africa to the formal effects that Picasso was striving for.⁶ Picasso early began a collection of African art, being, with the exception of Matisse, the only artist of this time to do so on any con-

siderable scale.⁷ It is not without significance that at the same time he was hanging on his walls the paintings of the Douanier Rousseau, paintings which certainly have no formal relationship to African art, and whose emotional relationship, which we will presently examine, it is difficult for us, with a greater knowledge of primitive sculpture, now to see.⁸

The first of Picasso's negro-izing work is a series of portrait studies of the year 1907.⁹ Apparently the earliest of these are a *Head*, which by its manner of wearing the hair we are justified in calling a self-portrait, and a full-length standing *Nude*.¹⁰ Both of these have certain definite influences from the style of the Ivory Coast: The oval head coming to a point under the chin, the lozenge eyes, the large long nose sharply separated from the plane of the face, and the small pursed mouth all are reminiscent of the stylizations of the masks and grave figures of the Ivory Coast. (Fig. 32.) Moreover the simplification of the ear of the *Head* may well come from the simple "U" turned on its side which is found on Ivory Coast bobbins; while the modelling of the torso of the *Nude*, which shapes the belly to a point, characterizes certain of the older Ivory Coast ancestor figures.¹¹ It is to be noted that the surfaces of the forms of these two paintings, in spite of concavities of outline in the *Nude*, are still convex, with an emphasis on their roundness and positive bulging qualities. In the simplification of their forms, the reduction of the face to one or two simple planes, of the nose to a sharp-edged pyramid, and in the straightening of arms and legs, Picasso goes much further than the negro sculptors. What in the African statues are subtle relations and delicate modelling, Picasso changes into striking contrasts and dramatic effects. (Fig. 33.) Thus the heavy upper eyelid and bulging eyeball is replaced by a staring open eye; the long column of the neck, important in establishing the permanence of a vertical axis, is hidden, so that head and body are juxtaposed without visible connection; while what were repetitions of generally similarly shaped masses

become repetitions of parallel contours.¹² Our photograph places the *Nude* next to a Senufo figure. The similarity is enlightening. (Figs. 34, 35.) Yet Picasso's expressiveness, his assertions of posture and personality and simplifications of design go even further than this comparatively unsubtle and dramatic figure. The contrast with the more typical subdued nuances of Baulé figures is obvious.

These tendencies are continued in what are, to judge by their movement towards a later style, the next works completed by Picasso: the studies for two parts of the large figure painting, the *Young Ladies of Avignon*, also of 1907. The study for the standing figure on the right is close to the head and bust of the previously discussed *Nude*. (Fig. 38.) It has, however, an increased emphasis on hollows and shadows at the expense of unbroken surfaces of solid form. Thus the mouth, small and shut in the earlier canvas, is now large and open, and the nose casts a large double shadow, destroying the plane of the cheek. The eyes have become bigger and darker and show the influence of Bakota metal technique. In addition there is an astigmatic shifting of forms which forecasts certain features of later cubist work. The study for the seated figure on the right seems removed from the inspiration of Baulé art; yet in its violent contortion and twisting of the nose, which become more remarkable if we can for the moment forget Picasso's later work, we must recognize a personal adaptation of the mask shapes of the northern Ivory Coast, an influence more clearly seen in other faces of the completed picture.¹³ (Fig. 40.) Picasso had seen examples of Melanesian art at the *Trocadéro*, which, due to France's earlier connections in Oceania, had an important collection of South Sea objects long before it had gathered anything from Africa.¹⁴ But though this particular elongated face with its emphasis on the nose and its tilted eyes may also demonstrate in a general way the inspiration of masks and figures of New Caledonia, the resemblance is not very close, and the solidity of the forms shows that the African influence is still very strongly present.

Of the finished picture of the *Young Ladies*, only the two figures at the right are under African influence. (Fig. 39.) The figures at the left are earlier, and as has been pointed out are still "reminiscent of the robust sculpturesque classical nudes" which for a brief time in 1906 followed upon the "Rose" period.¹⁵ An indirect influence from Africa is nevertheless discernible in the profile face at the extreme left, the darkness of whose modelling, and the separation of whose planes indicate its reworking for a stronger accent to balance the two striking faces at the right. The bodies of all five figures, however, show no more influence of the primitive than a simplification of form, which, while it may be inspired by African practice, does not in any way recall it: There is a distinct division between the two primitive-inspired heads and the bodies, closer to the earlier style of 1906, on which they are placed.

The paintings of the following year, 1908, although they move in the direction of cubism, are still under the influence of negro sculpture. The *Dancer* of 1907-08 has the same oval head, small half open mouth, long straight nose, and lozenge shape eyes with staring pupils that we saw in the earlier work. Here the derivation from Bakota metal-covered grave images is seen not alone in the silhouette with its joined legs, but also in the modelling.¹⁶ (Figs. 36, 37.) There is again the increased dramatization that we have noted. The planes of the face, depicted with less modelling, have become flatter, the shadow of the nose is entirely schematic and geometric, and the transition from one plane to another is sharp and without gradation. Newest in style, although of the same year, are the *Woman with a White Towel* and the *Two Nudes* (Figs. 41, 42.) In these two pictures the exaggeration of the hands and a simplification of the fingers into blocked out units in order that the hand may become a more important plastic unit than it otherwise would be (already found in the *Young Ladies of Avignon*), are both characteristic of African sculpture, which here play an important part.¹⁷ But in the formation of the heads, in which

the surfaces have almost all become concave, meeting each other in ridges, and where the former balancing of the two sides of the face—indicated by the pointed chin for which a continuous rounded contour is now substituted—is lost, the African influence is weaker. Further evidence of this fact is to be found in the loss of the verticality of the neck, which though not rendered has until now been implied, and by the bending forward and sideways of the heads; in addition there is the omission of the direct glance, characteristic of the paintings thus far considered, and the substitution of a blank, but lighted, eyeball. All these features indicate a sentimentality toward his subjects which recalls Picasso's earlier work of 1901 to 1905, an attitude far removed from the plastic and psychological self-containment of negro sculpture. This reversion finally re-asserts itself openly in a subject typical of the earlier period, the *Harlequin* of 1909, a picture which we may consider as closing Picasso's "negroid period."^{17a}

One other painting of this time must be mentioned, *The Farm Woman* of 1908. (Fig. 43.) Here Picasso has combined his previous lessons from the Africans with that influence from Cézanne which had already been having its effect upon Braque.¹⁸ This picture might, indeed, be an illustration of the famous sentence written by Cézanne to Emil Bernard, and published by him in 1905: "You must see in nature the cylinder, the sphere, the cone."¹⁹ Only in its special application to the human face, the particular province in which it had been least applied by Cézanne and also by Braque, and which must have been suggested by Picasso's study of African heads, is the influence of primitive art evident here. In other respects it shows the growing influence of Cézanne and of Braque, and the replacing of the dominant negro influence by those tendencies—evident in the *Head of a Woman* (1908-09), and the *Harlequin* (1909), which are to lead directly to the following five-year period of "analytical cubism."²⁰

Since these few works of the period 1906 to 1909 are those which, in the field of painting at least, come closest to direct formal borrow-

ings from primitive art, it is of some importance to analyze their relation to the primitive, and so understand the reasons for the admiration given to it. In the first place how can we account for Picasso's simultaneous appreciation of the work of Henri Rousseau, which in its striving for academic realism and its actual result of flat patterns of color is at the opposite pole from a sculpture which is more basically conceived in three dimensions than any that Europe has produced. Since this contrast in formal qualities is obvious, we must look for the connecting link rather in the psychological attitudes of the two arts, or more accurately, in these attitudes as they were conceived by Picasso. In comparison with the works of Picasso up to 1906, we are struck by the psychological directness of the paintings of the following three years. With the exceptions we have discussed, which, precisely, are revivals of an earlier tone, the romantic sentimentality of that precedent period is gone. The bent heads, the self-contemplative or self-consciously challenging glances of the Blue and Rose periods are replaced by vertical heads in three-quarter view and eyes that, even when they are empty of pupil, assert an existence to the world in general rather than to the particular spectator. Even in the *Young Ladies of Avignon* (closest to the work of that time) the figures have no relation to each other.

Now one of the characteristics of African sculpture, which is coupled with its formally static qualities, whose partially technical origin we need not analyze here, is the relative permanence of the states of feeling which it renders. This is true, for obvious reasons, above all of those statues which are intended as dwelling places for the souls of the dead, and which, because of the required resemblance to the owner, are a kind of living death mask; but even the dance masks, though in use only for short periods of time, are the objectivising of a state of feeling which is conceived as having an independent, enduring existence.²¹ This relative permanence is also true, in spite of formal differences which do not need to be emphasized,

of the work of Rousseau and the other "Sunday painters." In their case it is due partly to a lack of technical ability which in the exaggeration of realistic detail and in its making rigid all the forms that it renders gives its scenes to the sophisticated eye a symbolic permanence that is not the conscious intention of the painter. This effect would not, however, be possible without an intensity of feeling about the object or the emotion to be portrayed, and without a belief in the psychological importance and aesthetic efficacy of his art that makes careful and minute delineation worth while, and that is akin to the feeling of the primitive artist. The projection of Rousseau's dreams upon canvas and his belief in the reality of their independent existence is similar to the objectivising of certain spirits in primitive masks. In both moreover, there is the unselfconscious acceptance of an artistic tradition (directly opposed to an academic acceptance), which permits concentration on the desired expression. It is true in this sense alone, to say, as Guillaume Apollinaire did of Rousseau, that "One finds no mannerism, no calculated procedure, no system"; and in this sense, in spite of the contrast of its technical achievement with Rousseau's inadequacy to the task he set himself, it is also true of African sculpture.^{22a}

Picasso's appreciation of this supposed "naïveté" is precisely what makes possible his juxtaposition of these two arts, and the directness and assertive qualities that we have noticed in the work of this period is due to its emulation. But the overdramatic qualities of Picasso's rendering which we have also remarked are due to his conscious attempt to assimilate what is thought to be an altogether unselfconscious attitude, but is really a preoccupation with other things which does away with a subjective artistic personality. Because this cannot be achieved by the modern artist, Picasso's figures, as Picasso himself, must continue to assert themselves to the world. In view of this attitude it is not surprising that the "negroizing" of these paintings should take the form of the copying of such features as blunt fingers and

conical noses; features which serve the double purpose of generalizing the figure, intending thereby to widen its meaning, and of giving it an obviously primitive aspect; and that the formal influence should be limited to exaggerated simplifications which have the same effect, rather than any real assimilation of the style of African sculpture. Certainly the affinity between primitive art and cubism, of which the style of this period is considered merely a forerunner, is not that one of pure form which is so often alleged.²³

The insertion at this point in our study of the name of Modigliani is for logical and chronological rather than for aesthetic reasons. He is, after Picasso, the painter who is most often mentioned as an example of the influence of African sculpture upon contemporary painting, and as such his art demands analysis. This primitive influence was in a sense more important for him than for Picasso, since if it is admitted it must be taken to have affected his whole production. Yet not only does it occur in isolation, because Modigliani's style and personality were without artistic issue, but it resulted in an entirely different sort of primitivism.

Modigliani first came into contact with African sculpture just as it was beginning to lose its hold upon the work of Picasso, in the year 1909.²⁴ At the same time, through the persuasion of Brancusi, Modigliani did his first work in sculpture, so that the African influence is first of all, and most directly, seen in the series of heads cut in stone that he executed in the years 1909 to 1912.²⁵ The relation of these works to the style of the Ivory Coast, the same African region with which we have seen that Picasso came into contact, becomes clear upon the juxtaposition of the stone head done in 1909, with an Ivory Coast dance mask, both formerly in the Paul Guillaume collection. (Fig. 37.) We find the same rectangular shape in the face, the same long, fine, flat nose, and the same joining of the line of the nose and eyelids. But though the almond shape of the eyes is identical, in place of the heavy drooping lids of the negro mask the eyes

are simply blanks, a substitution which we have also remarked in the painting of Picasso. The mouth is a narrow short slit, as in the mask, but it has been moved up close under the nose instead of being down near the bottom of the chin, and has been given a slight upward twist reminiscent of the expression of Indo-Chinese Buddhas; while the manner of incising the hair in long wavy strands recalls the work of archaic Greece seen through the eyes of Brancusi.²⁶ In place of the death-like character of the African masks, which to European eyes is "mysterious" and "primitive," the whole has become sweet and coy.

This head is the one which comes the closest to any African work. In the others done at the same period, the only years when Modigliani did any sculpture, certain features such as the long narrow nose and the empty oval eyes are retained, but the extreme elongation of the heads and their flattened oval character reveal the influence of Brancusi's own sculpture, itself influenced by Africa: Whether it is only the chin that is pointed while the forehead remains broad, as in the *Head of a Woman* (1910-13), or whether the whole takes on a shape much like that of Brancusi's *Prometheus* (1911), as in the *Head* for which there is a sanguine drawing of the same time, the primitive style is always felt through this intermediary means.²⁷

Certain of the features which belong to Modigliani's characteristic style derive from this period of his work in sculpture, and so at least indirectly from African art.²⁸ Thus the long oval of the head, the almond eyes set close together, whether with a pupil or empty as we have noted them in Picasso, the long nose with the sudden spread of the nostrils at the very end, and the small mouth are retained from the sculpture. That it is definitely this influence from which they derive may be seen by comparing any of the canvases before 1909, when the dominant influence is that of Toulouse-Lautrec, as shown in such pictures as *The Amazon* (1908) and *Moder Branteska* (1908), with the impression of Cézanne, as witnessed by the *Beggar of Livorno*, beginning to be felt in 1909. But in spite of these separate

details, each derived ultimately from Africa, Modigliani's style is only barely reminiscent of primitive sculpture. Though he keeps the long neck that we have noticed Picasso omitting, he bends and curves it, as he tilts the head, in order to continue the arabesque of the sloping shoulders; the oval eyes are tilted, and the long nose becomes concave in outline. In his flat forms Modigliani never achieves any of the effect of cubic mass that is supposed to be the main influence of negro art, and even his sentimental linear rhythms are far removed from the repetitions of design on which African sculpture is built. In accordance with the decorative character of his whole art his deformations of form are elongations adding to grace and sentiment, and so are directly opposed to the thickenings of mass characteristic of negro sculpture. Thus even the attempted psychological assimilation of Picasso is missing in the case of Modigliani.

With an occasional exception, such as the squat proportions noted by Barr in a Derain *Nude* of 1908, it is in the work of these two artists that the direct formal effect of primitive art is to be seen, and to what extent we have already noted.²⁹ In view of the analyses we have given of other artists who claimed a formal affinity with the primitives, it is not surprising, in spite of the more exclusive point of view claimed for these two men, to find how far from any true assimilation of primitive art their work is and intends to be. It is clear that in the case of Picasso as well as that of Modigliani, those who claim that their styles are not "borrowed from the art of the Ivory Coast" are quite correct.³⁰ The relation is rather that of an admiration which, through the reproduction of certain details of stylization and the short-hand transformation of certain formal characteristics, creates a reminiscence of primitive art in the mind of a beholder imbued with a similar knowledge and admiration. In so far as this is done, however, it indicates a greater study and penetration of the formal style of primitive art than we have hitherto been able to record. It is perhaps just because of this that, in contrast with those whom we

have called emotional primitivists, in whose work we have noticed a gradual expansion from foreign to indigenous manifestations, there should here be a complete break, so that the further aspects of intellectual primitivism, in other words a primitivism imagining itself to be of form alone, will have to be studied in another section.

Notes:

The Direct Influence of Primitive Sculpture

- ¹ Both Picasso and Braque have well-known aversions to saying anything about their art. Picasso's first statements are not until after 1930. Cf. *Cahiers d'Art*, vols. VII, X; and "Letter on Art." *The Arts*. Feb., 1930; no. 2, pp. 3-5.
- ² Apollinaire, Guillaume, *Catalogue: Premier Exposition de l'art Nègre et d'art Océanien* (Paris: Galerie Devambez, 1919), p. 7. Reprinted from *Premier Album de Sculptures Nègres*, 1917. Apollinaire almost takes pleasure in the fact that "rien ne vient éclairer le mystère de leur anonymat . . ."
- ³ See above, Chapter III, p. 74.
- ⁴ Picasso himself (July, 1936) furnished only the most vague indications on the subject.
- ⁵ In an article in *Le Temps*, Oct. 14, 1913, quoted by Janneau, Guillaume, *L'art cubiste: théories et réalisations* (Paris: Charles Moreau, 1929), p. 12; Apollinaire refers to "les imagiers de la Guinée et du Congo," apparently using Guinea to refer to the whole West Coast region. Janneau remarks on the "amused condescension" with which he still treats primitive sculpture. Both M. Daniel Kahnweiler and M. Charles Ratton have assured me that it was the sculpture of the Ivory Coast with which Picasso was familiar.
- ⁶ This was due to the fact that Cameroon was a German colony; see above, Chapter I, Part I. For similarities cf. *Seated Figure* in the Chadbourne Coll.; *Mask*, Tzara Coll.; *Mask*, Leipzig Museum (Museum of Modern Art, *Corpus of African Sculpture*, nos. 257, 273, 275); others might be adduced.
- ⁷ See above, Chapter III.
- ⁸ Raynal, Maurice, *Picasso* (German ed.; Munich: Delphin-Verlag, 1921), p. 53; he mentions in his description of the atelier of Picasso Rousseau's *Portrait of Yadwigha*.
- ⁹ These works have been arranged on the basis of their movement toward cubism: increasing flattening of planes and emphasis on hollows enclosed by such planes replacing convex solid bodies. The dates are those of M. Kahnweiler, who handled all of Picasso's work at this time.
- ¹⁰ This is the way Picasso still wears his hair. Midway between these and the studies for the *Young Ladies* is another *Head*.

- ¹¹ Cf. grave figures in the Ratton and Fenéon Collections, Museum of Modern Art, *Corpus*, nos. 72 and 73.
- ¹² For a study of the formal qualities of African sculpture, which fits in with what is supposed to be the "cubist" attitude, cf. Guillaume, Paul, and Thomas Munro, *Primitive Negro Sculpture* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1926). Alfred Barr has also suggested this comparison.
- ¹³ The reference by Janneau, *op. cit.*, pp. 12 and 13, to "Melanesian fetishes" seems to be a confusion of terms, since African art is always meant.
- ¹⁴ See above, Chapter I, Part I, p. 2. M. Kahnweiler mentioned that Picasso frequently visited the Trocadéro.
- ¹⁵ Barr, Alfred, *Cubism and Abstract Art* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1936), p. 30.
- ¹⁶ Barr, *loc. cit.*, says of this picture: "The silhouette of the body as well as its mask are definitely derived from BaKota metalcovered fetishes from the Gabun." It is, however, interesting that the silhouette of the arms is already found in embryo in the two center figures of the *Young Ladies*, which, as Barr points out, belong to an earlier style. Cf. also the sketch for the *Young Ladies* in the Gallery of Living Art. The comparison is also made by Sweeney, James Johnson, *Plastic Redirections in 20th Century Painting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934), plates V, VI.
- ¹⁷ For example, the figure in the Museum of Modern Art, *Corpus*, no. 72.
- ^{17a} Even relative to Picasso's rapidly changing styles the "negroid period" must be considered transitional in character.
- ¹⁸ It is undoubtedly to this painting that Janneau, *op. cit.*, p. 12, refers: "les uns, évoquant à l'esprit le souvenir de l'Egypte et semblant appliquer un véritable canon de formes géométriques." No other so clearly programmatic is known to me.
- ¹⁹ Quoted by Barr, *loc. cit.*; and elsewhere. Lifting this sentence from its context makes it seem much more important than it is in the midst of Cézanne's usual emphasis on the observation of spots of light and color.
- ²⁰ Braque and Picasso did not meet until 1908, when Braque noticed the *Young Ladies* at the Salon.
- ²¹ The spirits which take up residence in the masks at least for the time of their use represent for the most part single states of feeling. Cf. Maes, *Anioto-Kijwebe* (Antwerp: Editions De Sikkell, 1924), *passim*; Lowie, R. H., *Primitive Religion* (London: Routledge, 1925), *passim*.
- ²² Apollinaire, Guillaume, *Méditations esthétiques* (Paris: Figuière, 1913), p. 56. The "charming child" attitude taken toward Rousseau is shown by the often-mentioned dinner given to him in 1908 by the members of this group.
- ²³ E.g. Janneau, *op. cit.*, p. 7: "Ainsi l'oeuvre de Cézanne et celle des fétichistes melanesiens sont les véritables génératrices du cubisme."
- ²⁴ Pfannstiel, Arthur, *Modigliani* (Paris: Marcel Scheur, 1929), p. 81.
- ²⁵ There are five of these heads, all done in *pierre d'euville*, and no other sculpture of this time.

²⁶ E.g. *The Kiss*, done by Brancusi in 1908, has such hair.

²⁷ Brancusi's *Maiestra* (1912) has a surmounting head with overhanging forehead and long squared nose which is clearly derived from the so-called "Goli" masks of the Baoulé of the Ivory Coast.

²⁸ These features are so pervasive in Modigliani's work that it has not been thought necessary to mention particular pictures.

²⁹ Barr, *loc. cit.*, and fig. 17. A Matisse *Nude* of 1908 might also be mentioned.

³⁰ Pfannstiel, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

PRIMITIVIST TENDENCIES IN ABSTRACT PAINTING

In our last section we quoted Guillaume Apollinaire's purely aesthetic evaluation of negro sculpture, and his not unconnected realization, which was far from minimising his pleasure, that for a long time to come it would not be either chronologically or iconographically possible to place these objects. The appreciations of primitive art which we cited in the first chapter were the result of a similar point of view, affecting ethnologists as well as critics.¹ The praise of both Roger Fry and Carl Einstein of African sculpture as being more truly "sculpturesque," that is more essentially conceived in three dimensions, than anything which Europe had produced, is likewise on a purely formal basis, a basis which extracts each object from its context and views it as an aesthetically isolated absolute. Even such writers as Boas and Lowie, who insist upon the technical and sociological origins of primitive art, base their comparisons with the art of civilized man upon the similarity of a purely aesthetic impulse which they find common to all men; while the claim of a field worker like Rattray is that primitive art is as aesthetically "pure" as any other. In general modern ethnologists seem to be trying to reverse the total neglect of aesthetic values of which their science had earlier been guilty.²

Though these new estimates were under the influence of an "abstract" or purist point of view, we have seen in the cases of Picasso

and Modigliani how impure such attempts at "pure" appreciation can be, and the same results of conflicting form and exoticism might well be pointed out in the work of those sculptors who also thought they were borrowing only the formal aspects of their primitive predecessors.³ Yet this attitude toward primitive art is directly connected with a kind of simplification, if not primitivizing, of form, and an intended expansion of emotional meaning and widening of popular appeal that was supposed to result. We will see to what extent, without borrowing the form of the primitives or having any exotic connotation, the abstract art which we are to consider has elements of an indigenous primitivism. Certainly its claims to complete abstraction and purity are not justifiable, nor did it "logically" carry out the implications of its program. But it is just because this program, as well as the paintings created under the influence of its principles, contains an emphasis on, and a praise of, the "simple" that we must include it in our study.

It is part, also, of the influence of this same desire to create an isolated, absolute work of art which is one of the chief aims of the various schools of abstract painting, that has led the criticism dealing with them to concentrate on minute analyses of form and to neglect another important aim which they have in common, namely the creation of an art out of the simple, fundamental elements of external nature.⁴ We find an emphasis on such elements in three of the most important schools of abstraction, those of the Suprematists, the Purists, and the Neo-Plasticists. Thus along with their insistence upon painting as pure poetry, whose "sole aim is to satisfy the needs of lyricism," Ozenfant and Jeanneret, the theorists of Purism, demand that the painter

"create images, organisations of forms and of colors which may be the carriers of fundamental and invariable characters of object-themes."⁵

The painter must work on the basis of "primary sensations" produced

by "unvarying elements" in order that he may arrange sensations which will be "transmissible and universal."

"Primary forms and colors have standard properties, universal properties which permit the creation of a transmissible plastic language. . . . The purist element, issue of the purification of standard forms, is not a copy but a creation whose goal is to materialise the object in all its generality and invariability."⁶

Therefore the "secondary elements" of association with known forms are concessions, to be used only to put the spectator into the proper mood to appreciate the more difficult primary ones:

"Purism is an art of plastic constants, avoiding conventions, and addressing itself before all to the universal properties of the senses and of the spirit."⁷

These themes, the themes of simplicity, fundamentality, and universality, run likewise through the theories of the other abstract schools, schools which profess to be opposed to purism, or see in it an unfortunately mistaken method. Van Doesburg, founder with Mondrian of *De Stijl* group in Holland (later called neo-plasticism), explains that in the art which he has discovered modern painting has reached its end:

"Modern painting approaches its end. . . . *Painting*, that is to say the occupation of making *visible* by the means of painting an equilibrium of relationships, a harmony. *Modern*, the search to create this harmony by the methods which are the most pure, the most true, and the most simple. These means alone are the most universal."⁸

Composition by personal taste is also an illusion and has no reason for existence. The goal of all the arts, working together, must be the creation of a plastic unity. Elsewhere Doesburg describes the evolution of modern art as

". . . towards the abstract and the universal . . . which has made possible the realisation, by a common effort and a common conception, of a collective style."⁹

Similarly Mondrian talks of the "employment of a rectangular plan,

universal synthesis of constructive elements," and of the merging of painting with architecture.¹⁰

The desire of both purism and neo-plasticism is to do away with the individual, the personal, the subjective elements of art. Both condemn cubism, though they consider it on the right road in its battle against the extreme subjectivity of the impressionists, as still depending too much upon the temperament and the individual sensibility of the artist. The transmission of his effects depends upon the chance discovery of a similarly attuned observer, and so he can only find a limited audience.¹¹ It must be noted, however—and we will return to this point in our discussion of the works actually created under the influence of these theories—that the objectivity of the painter, and the consequent automatic understanding of a collective body of spectators for which he is striving, is to be obtained almost solely by means of reduction and exclusion. Plastic and associative elements heretofore used by painters are to be simplified, purified, or eliminated altogether, and the admittedly desirable synthesis of these analytic parts is to be obtained only from a combination of the barren remnants. Consciously at least, plastic forms derived from a technical and mechanical environment unknown to older artists are to be omitted, even though such forms, stemming from objects of common experience, would be comprehensible to every one. Therefore in so far as the appeal made is to elements of sensation and to factors of the external world which are assumed to be simple because they are eternal, basic, and common (a moment's reflection upon the surrealists—to confine ourselves to painting—will show that supposed simplicity is by no means a necessary concomitant of supposed universality), and in so far as the combination of such elements is deliberately limited in its richness and complication, we may correctly speak of the "primitivizing" tendency of such theories.

Purists and neo-plasticists alike rely upon geometrical forms belonging to the external world to attain a generally meaningful artistic

product because they reduce the subjective element in any work to a minimum. The "creation of a work of art must make use of methods producing sure results," and such methods are to be found in the geometry of purified forms.¹² The suprematists do not deny the personal nor the temporally conditioned factor in art—Malevich calls it the "additional element"—but they see in it the true expression of the cultural environment of the artist just to the degree to which he is an original artist.¹³ They use geometrical forms such as the square, the circle, the cross, etc. ("suprematist elements"), because they make possible the supremacy of the "pure impression" in the plastic arts:

"The square of the suprematists and the forms arising from this square are to be compared to the primitive lines (marks) of primitive men, which in their ensemble do not portray an ornament but the impression of rhythm."¹⁴

"And so the new objectless art stands as the expression of the pure impression, which seeks no practical utility, no ideas, no 'promised land.'"¹⁵

"The suprematists, however, have given up the portrayal of the human face (and of natural objects in any case), and have found new lines for the reproduction of direct perceptions (not the form-shaped reflections of perceptions), because the suprematist does not see and does not touch—he feels."¹⁶

At the same time suprematist art, while it is abstract, or rather because it is abstract, is the expression of an "inspiring surrounding, a reality" to which it adds the "additional element" of dynamic character: "the suprematist straight line."¹⁷ It is the expression of a new culture, and is conditioned by its newest technical achievements, above all those of aviation, which is the most characteristic, in such a manner that suprematism could also be called "the aeronautical."¹⁸ Just how its absolute character as "pure sensation" is to be reconciled with its conditioned character as the expression of a particular culture Malevich does not explain. It is clear, however, that in its striving for such sensations, which will supposedly be common to and alike in every one, as well as in its use (which is considerably more arbitrary than tacit assumption of their fitness for such expression implies) of simple

geometric forms for their rendering, the suprematists are seeking the same kind of combined internal and external common denominator as the purists and the neo-plasticists. As in the theories of these latter, moreover, the common denominator sought is the lowest rather than the highest possible, and is again reached by the exclusion of all factors, which, though they may be common, belong to an environmental superstructure, and not to the simplest and most primitive factors of human nature which persist regardless, or supposedly regardless, of how the superstructure changes. This is evident in Malevich's criticism of futurism, which consists in the complaint of the inclusion by the futurists in their pictures of too many of the elements of mechanical "reality," elements closer to the reality of the academic artist than to the abstraction of the suprematist.¹⁹ Though both are interested in the dynamism of modern culture, the futurist leaves some trace of the complicated engines which are productive of motion, while the suprematist, viewing them in a way parallel to that of the impressionist, abstracts only their simplest geometrical aspects, and reduces their intricacies and variations to this lowest common denominator.²⁰

In calling such aesthetic theories simplest, or primitivist, we must make a distinction between them and philosophic or scientific theories which search for a fundamental law. The geometric forms which Plato in the *Philebus* conceives as basic constituents of the universe, first quoted by the cubists in their own support, are cases in point.²¹ Though seeking for a simple expression, as does any scientific statement, its purpose is to include and explain as many complicated and variegated phenomena as possible (this is indeed one of its tests), so that the final end of such a fundamental law is exactly opposed to the exclusion of a primitivist reduction. When such a scientific formulation is changed to an aesthetic one, when, for example, Plato's geometric forms are materialized—as he expressly says he did not mean them to be, the results, because they can embody only the ground-

work, and must omit the infinite variations possible to the intellectual theory, are necessarily simplist and primitivist.²² Both Leonardo, who "anticipated" the futurist "lines of force," and Cézanne, who talked (but rarely) of "the sphere and the cone" but painted them broken into patches of light and color, realised this; and their works are far from the direct, immediate, and unadulterated expressions which those whose theories we have been discussing would require.²³

We cannot enter here into a detailed analysis of all the canvases done in accordance with these theories. Such criticism has been performed *in extenso* by various writers, who have pointed out the infinite variations and the extreme subtlety of composition of a painter like Mondrian, who has managed endless refinements in the use of primary colors combined with different arrangements of the pure rectangle.²⁴ To a lesser degree this is also true of Doesburg, Ozenfant, and Malevich, all of whom fall into what they conceive as the error of the cubists. In so far as such analyses are correct, and such subtle results are achieved, the "simplist" qualities which we have been engaged in pointing out, and which should follow from the theories, are lost, and the resulting works require the extreme of delicate sensibility for their appreciation. (Fig. 47.) Just as in the case of the *fauves*, the reduction of the means employed, which is in and for itself a primitivist tendency, calls forth an elaboration, division, and refinement of the sole means remaining to the artist, and thereby creates an opposite tendency. In so far, however, as this latter tendency preponderates and produces sensitive harmonies within the picture, and it is usually just to this degree that we appreciate their paintings as "pure" art, the artists were being false to both poles of their proposed program: For on the one hand this interior elaboration, even within, or rather precisely because of the limits imposed by the artist upon himself, increased the personal aspects of the work produced, limiting its appeal to sensibilities in tune with those of an artist made over-acute by concentration upon a minute field, and excluding those who,

through the inclusion of subject-matter, might have come to some gross approximation of the artist's idea and intention. On the other hand, this increased personalization of the work contradicts the avowed aim of the artist to make use only of "objective" and "collective" means in order that he may be sure to transmit the idea carried by his creation. (Fig. 46.) Thus his final intention, the creation of a common or collective style, based on sensations, which, because they are not conditioned by the external accidents of environment, will be present and comprehensible to every one, is negated in the work of art as it actually comes into being. Were one philosophically inclined, one might even say that this must by definition be so, since a work of art, if it exists at all, is in itself a contradiction of the kind of universalisation by reduction and exclusion desired by the formulae of these schools. If this program of abstraction were carried to its logical end, it would simply do away with the work of art.²⁵

The really successful elimination of all subject-matter would have much the same totally destructive result; and we are not, as a matter of fact, justified in assuming that these artists succeeded in what was their avowed aim. The preservation of a general but definite content is clearest in the case of the purists, who wish to make use of typical objects in order to appeal to a wide public:

"Purism would never admit a bottle of triangular form, because a triangular bottle, which would perhaps some day be executed on command, is only an exceptional object, a fantasy, as is also the idea which has conceived it."²⁶

The purists, however, were engaged not so much in the representation of typical objects, as in showing, as subject-matter, the common geometric qualities basic to all such objects. In pictures like Le Corbusier's *Still Life* (1920), or the *Glass and Bottles* (1926) and *Vases in an Interior* (1926) of Ozenfant, the bottles, glasses, and pipe disappear, even as typical units, in favor of incarnations of geometrical forms which are considered as their essence, and as the essence of the spectator's world. But this geometry is by no means that of pure form,

since it carries direct and indirect connotation of meaningful objects from the spectator's environment, and so in spite of itself has associative values.²⁷ The concentration on typical mechanical forms had begun in the first quasi-geometrical compositions of synthetic cubism, which purism sought to expand and to purify.²⁸ (E.g., Picasso: *Heads*, 1912 and 1913; *Still Life with Guitar*, 1913; Braque: *Violin and Glass*, 1914; *Violin (papier collé)*, 1914.) These paintings used objects, which, while still aesthetic (as printed letters, books, etc.), have a more generalized content than the more personal objects of the preceding period of analytical cubism, and the purists continued on the road of generalization. (Fig. 39.)

An attention to mechanical forms is evident also in the work of Léger, who by 1913 was showing an interest in this aspect of the modern environment. But Léger, in spite of his interest in the "complexity of modern machinery," chose to break up his machines as he had previously broken up his figures and landscapes and reduce them to their component geometric parts, thereby creating a more or less uniform pattern of such simple basic units instead of a representation of the complexity and intricacy of the finished and worked out machine.²⁹ This is true even of his most differentiated compositions, those done from 1917 to 1921, whose patterns, though complex, suggest none of the articulation of parts which is a necessary characteristic of the machine in action. *The Factories* and *The Tugboat*, both of 1918, are cases in point; and it is to be noted that subjects like *The Acrobats* and *Le Cirque Medrano* are made up in the same way of similar geometrical forms whose use has hardly been changed by the radically different contents of the pictures. (Figs. 44, 45.) Instead of complexity, Léger, when he does not permit himself a nostalgic simplification, as in *The Mechanic* (1920), or *The Red Figure* (1926), creates a confusion of simple elements, thus showing where his main interest really lies. For him, as well as for the painters of purism, the forms employed are not simply plastic abstractions, but are really the

direct representation of what are conceived as the simple, common elements of a new mechanical environment, whose intellectual abstraction from actual objects has been made, not in the painter's eye while he is working, but in his mind before he begins to set his ideas upon canvas.

In the case of the other two groups the presence of this geometry as subject-matter, with all the associations of subject-matter, rather than as pure form, is demonstrated by their passage into other arts, notably architecture. Malevich's suprematist compositions, such as *Magnetic Attraction* (1914) and *Sensation of Current* (1915) contain such representations. But where these do not change into a wish like Kandinsky's to convey a mystical oneness through a simplified, symbolic form (e.g. *Sensation of World Space* (1916)), they refer to the modern mechanical environment only by means of the primitive constituent elements. That the transition to constructivism should have taken place so soon for many of the artists, a transition to an art which, though purporting to use the same factors did so with much more complication on the formal side and more direct associative reference on the side of subject-matter, indicates that the suprematist emphasis is on basic, simplist factors, which, unless rigidly repressed, are naturally expanded and combined by the artist into more intricate and differentiated organic wholes, and that this was the desire of the suprematists. In a similar way the incorporation of neo-plasticist designs as patterns for the decoration of the interiors of building, patterns which, by retaining their simple geometric character are felt to be an expression of the fundamental mathematical quality of the new architecture, shows that the squares and rectangles of neo-plasticist abstractions carry with them implications of content which belie their purely formal suppositions.³⁰ Here too are geometrical representations, however generalized, representations of the simple, primitive elements of an all-important mechanical environment whose varia-

tion and complication is scrupulously avoided by suprematists and neo-plasticists as well as by the purists.

The reasons for this avoidance of direct and unambiguous reference, involving as they do the whole position of the artist in his contemporary society, his attitude towards it, and his mutual relations with his public, we cannot analyze here. We wish merely to point out the similarities between this point of view, completely uninfluenced by primitive arts or by exotic yearning for primitive life, and that of those artists who were so influenced. Such similarities are of course only similarities, they are not congruities: Yet that movement of "interiorization and expansion" which we have noted among those whom we have grouped together as emotional primitivists is to a certain extent paralleled among the "intellectuals." In both (Picasso and the *Brücke*) there is at first an impulse from foreign, primitive sources, noticeable in content as well as in form; this gradually lessens as the content becomes wider and vaguer and its associations more indigenous, transferring their primitivism from beyond the seas to personal psychology or, as here, to personal environment; while form, becoming further and further identified with the primitivism of content, is also expanded, until for both a limit is attained. That limit, in so far as it can be consciously conceived, we have again reached here, as we saw it was reached in the latest works of the *Blaue Reiter*; we must therefore transfer our attention to the primitivism of the subconscious.

Notes:

Primitivist Tendencies in Abstract Painting

¹ See above, Chapter I, Part II, pp. 31-33, for the discussion of this attitude. Most private collecting, where it is not simply curio interest, has a similar basis.

² This is borne out also by the change in the museum display of primitive art; see above Chapter I, Part I.

³ Particularly the work of Brancusi, whose interest in the exotic side of the primitive

comes out clearly in the rough wooden bases he uses in exhibiting his sculpture, purposely unfinished and primitive. Other sculptors, as Epstein and Barlach, have made no pretense at not borrowing more than primitive form.

⁴ This association of critic and artist, resulting in the acceptance by the critic of an "interior" evaluation, derives from the same set of circumstances which produce the desire for an "absolute" isolated work of art: both are arrayed against the general public.

⁵ Ozenfant, A., and Ch.-E. Jeanneret, *La Peinture Moderne* (Paris: Povolozky, ca. 1920), p. 1; and "Le purisme," *L'esprit nouveau*, January, 1921, no. 4, p. 377. It is the machine "qui soulage ainsi la peinture de toutes ses servitudes basses et accessoires."

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 386.

⁷ *Loc. cit.* It is thus that purism will avoid "un art de mode"; and "doit tendre à l'objectivation d'un 'monde' entier."

⁸ Doesburg, Théo van, "Réponse à notre enquête 'Où va la peinture moderne?'," *Bulletin de l'effort moderne*, I (1924), no. 3, p. 7.

⁹ Doesburg, Théo van, "Vers un style collectif," *Bulletin de l'effort moderne*, I (1924), no. 4, p. 16. All these writers take for granted that a collective style is something desirable: Ozenfant, *op. cit.*, p. 372, ". . . cette vérité élémentaire, que toute chose de valeur universelle, vaut mieux que toute chose de valeur seulement individuelle."

¹⁰ Mondrian, Piet, "Réponse à notre enquête 'Où va la peinture moderne?'," *Bulletin de l'effort moderne*, I (1924), no. 2, p. 6: ". . . le passage de la peinture à la réalisation plastique de notre ambiance matérielle."

¹¹ Doesburg, *loc. cit.*; Ozenfant, *op. cit.*, p. 376.

¹² Ozenfant, *op. cit.*, p. 378.

¹³ Malevich, Kasimir, *Die gegenstandlose Welt* (Munich: Albert Langen, 1927), p. 24: "Das additional Element ist das Zeichen einer Kultur, das in der Malerei durch eine charakteristische Verwertung der 'Geraden' und der 'Geschwungenen' zum Ausdruck kommt."

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 92. Cf. also: "unter Suprematismus verstehe ich die Suprematie der reinen Empfindung in der bildenen Kunst," p. 65.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 59. "Das additional Element des Suprematismus nenne ich 'die suprematistische Gerade' (dynamischen Charakters)."

¹⁸ *Loc. cit.* "Die dieser neuen Kultur entsprechende Umgebung ist durch die neuesten Errungenschaften der Technik insbesondere der Aviatik gegeben, so dass man den Suprematismus auch den 'aeronautischen' nennen koennte."

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 61: "Die Futuristen und die Industriearbeiter arbeiten Hand in Hand—sie schaffen bewegliche Dinge und bewegliche Formen. . . . Der Futurist soll aber keineswegs die Maschine portraetieren, er soll neue abstrakte Formen schaffen." The primitivist elements of the futurist program, inherent in a mystical emphasis on violent emotion and experience as such, taking pleasure in brutality where the expres-

sionists seem to be driven to it, come out more clearly in their social and political program than in their artistic activities. Cf. Saint-Point, Valentine de, "Manifest der futuristischen Frau," *Der Sturm*, III (1912), 26. "Frauen, ihr waret zu lange im Moral und Vorurteilen irrglauebig; kehrt zu eurem erhabenen Instinkt zurueck, zur Wildheit, zur Grausamkeit." Cf. also Marinetti's praise of war as "the sole hygiene of the world" in the first futurist manifesto, February, 1909.

²⁰ Cf. the photographs in Malevich, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-23. As with the early impressionist views of city scenes, the objects are far enough away so that it is the aesthetic effect of their surface qualities that counts; the suprematist, however, chooses to pick out geometric patterns, where the impressionist saw patterns of light and broken color. Contrast the "reality" of academic and futurist artists (*Ibid.*, pp. 20-21), given by close-up photographs in which objects retain their separate identities.

²¹ Plato, *The Dialogues of Plato*. Translated by Jowett, Benjamin (Oxford: University Press, 1875), IV, 98-99. Quoted by Rosenberg, Léonce, *Cubisme et tradition* (Paris: Editions de l'effort moderne, 1920), pp. 6-7. These are always coupled with Cézanne's "spheres and cones."

²² Plato, *loc. cit.* The reference is specifically to the practical arts:

"... understand me to mean straight lines and circles, and the plane or solid figures which are formed out of them by turning lathes and rulers and measurers of angles. . . ."

²³ Barr, Alfred, *Cubism and Abstract Art* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1936), p. 56, refers to this anticipation.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 140-153.

²⁵ Plato, *op. cit.*, p. 111, perhaps means something like this when later in the same argument he says:

"Socrates: Do you mean that you are to throw into the cup and mingle the impure and uncertain art which uses the false rule and the false circle? Protarchus: Yes, that must be done if any of us is ever to find his way home."

This is not contradicted later in the discussion.

²⁶ Ozenfant, *op. cit.*, p. 377.

²⁷ This is more or less admitted by Ozenfant, *loc. cit.*, though with reluctance; moreover the content, as we have tried to point out, is not quite that realised by the artists themselves.

²⁸ Barr, *op. cit.*, p. 163; and Ozenfant, *op. cit.*; *passim*.

²⁹ Zervos, Christian (Editor), "Exposition Fernand Léger au Kunsthaus de Zurich." *Cahiers d'art*, VIII, (1933), nos. 3-4, *passim*. Barr, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, figs. 145, 146, 147.

CHAPTER VI

THE PRIMITIVISM OF THE SUBCONSCIOUS

THE MODERN PRIMITIVES

THE discussion of the last chapter, concerning Picasso's appreciation of the primitivism of African sculpture, mentioned his simultaneous admiration for the work of Henri Rousseau. It was pointed out there that Rousseau's connection with the art of primitive peoples lay in the similar appeal which his painting made to the emotions of sophisticated artists, rather than in any objective formal qualities which it has in common with the art production of aboriginal tribes.¹ The problem of the modern primitives—Rousseau and the other "naïve" artists who have been associated with him—is introduced into our discussion from this point of view, and with this fact in mind, and not because we wish to discuss the complicated question of the nature of primitive art as such. The problem can be divided into two distinct, though necessarily related, aspects: The first is the question as to what is meant by the primitivism, or the naïveté, of these artists, since such a description, unless we wish merely to indicate an identity with other characteristics already defined as primitive, is of qualities which are always relative, and has the implication of external standards which must condition its evaluation. The second is the question of the kind of appreciation given this so-called naïve art, and the extent to which it was relevant to the aim and intention of the "naïve" artists on the one hand, and to the production of the "sophisticated" artists on the other. We must consider a double contrast: that of the aim of the artist and his achievement; and that of the achievement of the

artist and its appreciation. Such contrasts are perhaps always present, even with a contemporary public, and no matter who the artist; but the very fact that these painters are distinguished from others as naïve indicates that in their case the distances between the poles have reached such magnitude that they are of paramount importance, and that far from wishing to destroy them, a conscious pleasure is taken in their existence.

The name of "Sunday painters" which was at one time given to the artists—Rousseau, Vivin, Bombois, Bauchant, Séraphine, Léfèbre—of this group is not accurate in its implications.² Most of them had, it is true, at one time or another to earn their livings by other means than that of painting. Nevertheless painting for them was not a pastime nor even a secondary activity. Rousseau long before he retired, Bombois and Bauchant before they were taken up by a group of collectors, considered art their real occupation and any other work an unfortunately necessary evil, to be abandoned as soon as possible. This fact is not to be neglected, because it distinguishes these artists from those true Sunday painters whose designation they appropriated, of whom Gauguin, before he devoted himself entirely to his art, is the most notorious example.³ The stir and storm of disapproval caused by Gauguin's ceasing to "earn his living" indicate the light in which these men and their associates regarded their own artistic activity: For these dilettante bourgeois painting really was an avocation to be indulged when the serious business of life had been taken care of, an aesthetic performance with no practical significance, cut off from the rest of one's thinking. To turn artist, that is to turn "Bohemian" as Gauguin had done, was not even imaginable. But for Rousseau and for his later colleagues, at least as long as they were "unspoiled," painting was a method of setting down not only their impressions, but also their ideas about the world; and, what is more important, a means of conveying these ideas to others. The seriousness and consequent meticulousness which sprang from such an attitude to art

was responsible for much of that naïveté which was, as we will see, the principal cause of their popularity.

On the purely technical side, it is quite justifiable to call these painters naïve if by that adjective we are simply pointing out a mechanical inadequacy to accomplish the task that they had set themselves. It has been forgotten that the ideal of all these artists was just that nineteenth century academic traditionalism which all the artists and amateurs who finally came to an appreciation of their work were striving to avoid, but which they themselves simply never attained. And it is the striving for this academic, "photographic" goal, rather than any inner kinship with the primitive artists who stress realistic detail because of its magical properties and its religious uses, which results in the careful leaf by leaf rendering of Rousseau's forests, or the brick by brick depiction of Vivin's Chamber of Deputies, patterns bearing, it is true, a certain resemblance to the primitive treatment of ornamental surface.⁴ However far from the ideal technical limitations may in certain cases cause the pictures to be, it only needs a comparison of Rousseau's *Cabriolet du Père Juniet* (1903) with a contemporary photograph of the same subject to convince us of this fact: It becomes evident that in spite of the artist's involuntary "re-presentation" of nature the transcription is as close as he has been able to make it.⁵ The same may be said of his group portraits, in which, as in the English conversation pieces of the eighteenth century, a uniformity of facial type is only the result of a *faute de mieux* formula, and not of a desired stylisation.⁶ The recognition which Rousseau longed for he wished to have so that he might establish himself in others' eyes as he was in his own, a solid, serious, official artist with a recognized standing in the community, not a revolutionary and bohemian like those who finally did accord him friendship.⁷ In this too, Rousseau was *retardataire*; his contemporaries had already made a virtue of a necessity. The extent to which Rousseau's art was based upon previous conventions is evident in his *Haystacks*. Here a typical impressionist

and a typical Barbizon subject are combined, and his own "style" is as much as possible abandoned. Another case in point is his *Lake Lemán*. (Fig. 51.)

The desire for realism, and its basis in the academic and sophisticated art of the nineteenth century, is not invalidated either by the origin of any of Rousseau's subjects in sleeping or waking dreams, or, on the technical side by his inability to translate them on canvas to the full degree that he wished. That such dreams were possible to him is only evidence of a pictorial imagination which visualised his compositions in much the same way as those of other artists.⁸ Much of the tropical atmosphere of his pictures is also due to his rendering: The *Muse Inspiring the Poet* (1908) and the *Portrait of Joseph Brummer* (1909) have the same over-grown, rubbery foliage setting that gives an exotic air to the jungle scenes, yet the plants are obviously local and almost domestic; while the walker in the similarly tropical *Promenade in the Forest* is dressed for a *faubourg* stroll.⁹ This mixture shows that what is important even in those compositions whose intent is entirely exotic, is that though their elements may be due to a distorted and exaggerated reminiscence of his experiences in Mexico, or be the result of reading about distant exotic countries, they are simply events which he is recording as best he can. In spite of the large factor of imagination obvious to the spectator, for the artist these happenings are external to himself, existing in their own right unconditioned by his individual peculiarities of personality.¹⁰ The ferocity of Rousseau's animals derives chiefly from the convention of concentric circles which he uses for their eyes; but they have an interior, positive existence which also pervades their jungle setting, an assertive vitality which, in a manner comparable to the conceptions of William Blake (a more skillful artist, but also working with a *retardataire* form), does not wait for the impression of the spectator, but makes itself actively felt.¹¹ (Fig. 50.) This is also true of Rousseau's portraits and portrait groups. These are not interpretations of personality in a par-

ticular light, literal or figurative, as were the contemporary portraits, in so far still in an impressionist tradition, of the post-impressionists and early cubists; rather, they take this personality for granted as an integral whole, and seek to record some actual event in which it has played a part. This is the sense of *The Marriage* (1904), *Past and Present*, and the *Muse Inspiring the Poet* (1908).¹² The artist has no doubt about the existence of these people, nor is he trying to bring out the facets of a complicated and changeable personality. (Fig. 48.) The pictures are records, in the same sense that the ancestor portraits which lined the houses of the nineteenth century bourgeoisie were records, transcriptions whose aesthetic, *i.e.*, whose purely decorative value, was, if considered at all, an entirely secondary factor in their appreciation.¹³ They are, first of all, documents. The same interest may also be seen in those pictures whose perspective convention, subordination of figure to landscape which yet keeps an intimate quality, and choice of subject mark them as stemming from the school of Barbizon, a style which had by this time become conventional enough for Rousseau to use.¹⁴ (Fig. 49.) And in a similar way, as their vague boundary indicates, his "fantastic" pictures were records of events in the imagination, so that, as with the portraits, their first requirements were accuracy and realism.

For these reasons there is only a partial justification for calling the painting of Rousseau and his colleagues a folk art.¹⁵ Based upon a formal ideal which, although belated and *retardataire* when used by them, had nevertheless been developed by the advanced art of its time, upon an ideal which had not yet penetrated as common knowledge to the part of the population to which Rousseau belonged—and for which in rare cases he painted; his painting is a folk art only in the unselfconsciousness of the artist. Though, as we have just pointed out, Rousseau himself placed all his pictures on the same level, only a few of them made sense to the associates of his *quartier*. The portraits they could understand, the rest not. Rousseau's personal "childishness,"

which endeared him to the artists of Montmartre, only made him seem queer and eccentric. Although without that side of his personality he could not have been an artist at all, this is in itself indicative of the fact that in so far as his art is the result of this element it is not a proper product of the people.¹⁶ The same separation is implied in the fact that he could sell few of his pictures to his natural friends, that his market did not lie with those people who did not condescend towards him. It is perhaps going too far to say that true folk art is always anonymous, but at least it is always part of, understood by, and reabsorbed into the environment that has produced it. (Fig. 52.) With Rousseau this is eminently not the case; nor is it true of such artists as Vivin and Bombois who, cultivated by a sophisticated taste in the wake of an enthusiasm for Rousseau, had the same relation to their own art as did he, or who, like Léfèbre, intimidated by what they knew would be the attitude of those around them, tried to hide their artistic activity even from their admirers.¹⁷ (Fig. 53.) In the early pictures of Bombois that were painted before he became self-conscious the striving for an imitation of a recognized art form, in this case that of the early impressionists, influences not alone his method of composition, with its receding diagonals and figures gazing into space, but extends even to his choice of subjects, which have the contemplative, purely aesthetic character of the works of those artists.^{17a} The Beaux-Arts is evident in the use of classical and heroic themes.¹⁸ Whatever "visionary" quality may lie in the inspiration of their painting, the same academic realism, coupled with a mechanical technique more adequate to the attainment of its goal, also characterizes the work of the Frenchwoman Séraphine and the German Adolf Dietrich; as with Rousseau, the visions are to be painted as others would paint reality, the artists themselves did not think in visionary terms.

These considerations of the technical and social origins of "naïve" art do not, however, entirely upset the estimates which have been cur-

rent of the modern primitives. Rousseau has been called a "trained craftsman of delicate sensibility," and this we do not mean to deny.¹⁹ But it is important to realize that the style which he achieved was but a stopping place upon a road along which he would have travelled further if he could, and that the effect which he attains, seen from the point of view of the mechanics and psychology of its creation, is *because* of this intention, even if it is *in spite* of it from the point of view of the sophisticated observer. (Fig. 51.) Having reached the limit of his ability, Rousseau was able, due to an innate artistic sense and to unremitting work, to perfect a means of rendering which, because of this very perfection, we now take to have completely suited his purpose. But the example of other artists, such as Bauchant and Bombois, who changed their styles as they approached the facility they desired, shows that this style would have been transformed, and thus for the purposes of sophisticated appreciation would have been spoiled, had Rousseau been able to accomplish what he wished. That his manner should have been arrested just where it was is of course more than a mere mechanical accident. His style is intimately bound up with the decorative sense, the feeling for evenly distributed pattern and for contrasts and balances of pure and brilliant color, whose enjoyment is the basis of one side of the admiration for Rousseau's work. Nevertheless, some of his effects, such as the regular recurrence of a flat all-over pattern as in the *Landscape with Monkeys* (1910), or the continuous repetition of the same motive, as in the *Garden Landscape* (1908?), may also be found in the work of other "primitives," and wherever they occur are due to the technical arresting of this realistic ambition. That with Rousseau the final result may be controlled by a sensibility which is perhaps superior to those of the other men should not blind us to this correction, since it is finally their style (whose explanation we are seeking) which justifies the grouping together of the "naïfs." The recurrence of such uniform patterns in all of the painters of this

group, most obvious in the small linear units of Vivin and the repetitious waves of Peyronnet, would seem to indicate that they take pleasure in the rhythmic movements necessary for their production as well as in the final visual effect.²⁰ But the elaboration of this repetition into a decorative pattern without associative significance is controlled by the artist's wish to convey a real event, and by his conceptual realization of the parts of an object which must be present in order that it may exist. The psychological extremes of these two tendencies are to be found on the one hand in the minute all-over pattern produced by the schizophrenic, in which the movement used to render some particular feature is expanded into a decorative pattern by a kind of manual stutter; and on the other in the "second-stage" drawing of children, in which conceptual inclusions are allowed to override everything else.²¹

On the psychological side, moreover, we do not mean to question the usual assumption that in comparison with their sophisticated contemporaries Rousseau and the other artists for whom he created a vogue were "primitive." Like the true folk artist, whether aboriginal or provincial, he had an unquestioning belief in the efficacy and the comprehensibility of his painting, as well as a faith in its general purpose. His "ideology" was perhaps readily intelligible, but the details of its iconography and its symbolism were personal, deriving from experiences apart from those of the generality of his fellow citizens. In spite of this he did not consider that he was expressing emotions or a vision peculiar to himself. Not thinking of himself as queer, as did his neighbors and his artistic friends, not imagining that he was in opposition either to an established way of living or to an established artistic tradition, under no compulsion to artistic innovation or originality and so having no doubts as to his own seriousness of purpose, he managed to have an unsplit, generalized vision, and an unselfconscious ("naïve" "intuitive") acceptance of the importance of painting in his own life and in the

life of the community. It was this attitude that gives his paintings the "symbolic" quality usually attributed to them. Because his attitude to art was that of a previous period in that his subject-matter is not in itself aesthetic and that he used his technology to express an experience not contained within its own manipulation, and because he assumed that every one would be able to understand a language that he himself took for granted, Rousseau was able to accomplish what those who discovered him were attempting by other means: to render "classes" of experience. Rousseau's assumptions made his realism possible, and these included the spectator within a confident and meaningful world; but his realism becomes "magical" only through the connotations of a particular event, not through the typifying or generalizing of the event itself, reached through an attitude of surface objectivity. Those who later, in the interests of mysticism, equated a detailed surface realism with an abstraction and extraction of an inner essence, and pointed to Rousseau's work as the beginning of such a style, were confusing the results of his brush work with an aesthetic position which he would never have understood.²²

It has already been pointed out that it was as much for these qualities of use and meaning as for any purely decorative formal arrangements which he created that Rousseau was adopted by Apollinaire and his friends at the same time that they were discovering African art. The element of unselfconscious vision is even more important in the appreciation of Vivin, Bombois, and the others who admittedly are somewhat lesser natural artists. The admission of these men to any ranking would not have been possible among artists for whom brush manipulation and facility in the conventional copying of nature would be necessary conditions for any further artistic excellence. But neither, on the other hand, would it have been possible if it had been simply for *plastic fundamentals*, as they said, that Picasso and Apollinaire were seeking. The order and

the monumentality of the aboriginal and the modern primitives have no common plastic term. They result, given a minimum of artistic sensibility on the part of the particular artist, from the use of an accepted formal tradition for ends which are only unconsciously purely aesthetic. It was the recognition of this common attitude towards different plastic materials which caused them to be linked in admiration.

Notes:

The Modern Primitives

- ¹ See above, Chapter VI, The Modern Primitives.
- ² Uhde, Wilhelm, "Henri Rousseau et les primitifs modernes," *L'amour de l'art*, XIV (1933), 189.
- ³ This distinction was first suggested to me by Dr. Meyer Schapiro. Also see Uhde, *loc. cit.*
- ⁴ Soupault, Philippe, *Henri Rousseau, le douanier* (Paris: Editions des quatre chemins, 1927), p. 29.
- ⁵ Sweeney, James Johnson, *Plastic Redirections in 20th Century Painting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934), p. 16, and Plates IVa, IVb. The correct distinction made by Sweeney applies to the result; we are talking of the intent. Cf. Zervos, Christian, *Rousseau* (Paris: Editions cahiers d'art, 1927), p. 18.
- ⁶ Cf. Sitwell, Sacheverell, *Conversation Pieces* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1936), *passim*.
- ⁷ Note Rousseau's unrelenting representations at the Salons to which he was admitted. His persistence is not unlike that of Cézanne before his desire for recognition was embittered into the combined wish of solitude and revenge.
- ⁸ In accordance with his naïveté, these had extraordinary reality for him. Cf. the story of his having to open the window because of the impression made by his own canvas, Uhde, *op. cit.*, p. 190.
- ⁹ He could paint correct "eastern" scenes when he wished; cf. *The Holy Family* and the *Tiger Hunt*, influenced by the Biblical realism of the middle of the century.
- ¹⁰ In relation to the relative exotic and documentary character of some of these landscapes, it is interesting to compare them with certain Roman "Egyptian" landscapes, in which the same large unit foliage, flat relief, and silhouette against a high horizon are used. Cf. *The Flamingos*, with examples from the Villa Livia, Rome, Prima Porta.
- ¹¹ But Blake's religious mysticism is closer to primitive animism; also, though Blake did not make use of contemporary forms, he was not living in the midst of the most advanced art of his time.

- ¹² In the group portraits of Fantin-Latour, which also purport to be a simple record, it is the personalities that count, all as artists, and individually in their interplay.
- ¹³ The comparison is of course closest with the works belonging to the lower bourgeoisie, in which exterior display, whether of forceful personality or of possessions, is not necessary.
- ¹⁴ Cf. *Summer—The Pasturage* (1907), and *Landscape* (1906); note the use of the edge of the forest in the former, a typical Rousseau subject, the slight diagonal, and the placing of figures to enhance the sense of receding distance.
- ¹⁵ And not simply because it is of a higher quality than the work usually done by similar people; as e.g., Uhde, *loc. cit.*
- ¹⁶ Cf. Zervos, *op. cit.*, p. 23: "Enfin l'oeuvre de Rousseau n'est pas une oeuvre populaire, issue d'une conscience collective."
- ¹⁷ Léfèbre's work was first discovered by Erich Wolters, from whom he hid its identity, claiming for a long time that it was the product of a brother's hand.
- ^{17a} This show-off character is most evident in *Les Femmes*. Other pictures, as the views of Chartres, show "post-card" influence.
- ¹⁸ *Pericles justifying the Use of the People's Money, The Battle of Thermopylae, The Proclamation of American Independence.*
- ¹⁹ Sweeney, *loc. cit.*
- ²⁰ The relation of Jean Hugo to Rousseau is similar to the relation of Dufy to children's art. Cf. *Woman in Brown* in the Forest with any of Hugo's foliage patterns.
- ²¹ Cf. Prinzhorn, Hans, *Bildneri der Geisteskranken* (Berlin: J. Springer, 1923); and Eng, H., *The Psychology of Children's Drawings* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1931).
- ²² Kandinsky, Wassily, "Ueber die Formfrage," *Der Blaue Reiter*, pp. 92-93. Other writers, such as Roh, Franz, *Nach-Expressionismus* (Leipzig: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1925), seem to have derived their ideas from him.

THE CHILD CULT

Our discussion of the primitivism of the artists of the *Brücke* and *Blaue Reiter* groups noted a movement away from the exotic primitive and toward indigenous sources of primitive inspiration. Part of this tendency, which was also to be found among the *fauves*, was a new evaluation of children's art, in which educators and psychologists, as well as artists, were beginning to take an interest.¹ The members of the *Brücke* imitated its broad indefinite line technique, while Kandinsky admired the art of the child for what he saw as its

direct expression of the interior essence of things, a quality he conceived as important to all art. But none of the men whose work we have thus far examined have indulged in a complete copying of the child's method of representing its thoughts and its experiences; and it is only in the pictures of Paul Klee, associated and friendly with the *Blaue Reiter*, although never really a part of it, that we are given a chance to examine paintings in which the art of the child is the predominant influence.² Other artists—Dufy, Chagall, Feininger, Itten, Masson, Lascaux, even on occasion Picasso—have felt its attraction; but the work of Klee is the outstanding example of its hegemony, so that we may be permitted to use his paintings to determine its place in our analysis of primitivism.³ As in dealing with the modern primitives, our purpose is not to determine whether, in any absolute sense, such art is truly primitive, but to try to discover just what its particular characteristics are, and what are their relations to each other and to the assumedly primitive art from which they borrow.

Children's art is not the only primitive source from which Klee has drawn, nor do pictures with an obvious primitive affiliation constitute the whole of his production. Klee has studied masks in ethnographical as well as theatrical museums, and in the banded stripings of *The Mask* (1925) we may see an influence from the large Congo specimens which use a similar decorative motive, although in alterations of black and white.⁴ In addition, certain of his drawings, such as the *Façade* (1924), which establish an all-over repetitive linear pattern of small geometric shapes, indicate a knowledge of the tapa cloth designs of Oceania, more particularly those of the Society Islands which are executed in an almost uniform color.⁵ *Sheet of Images* (1937) copies the fish and plant motives, and the combined "Egyptian" perspective of New Guinea drawings. (Fig. 55.) When translated into painting this connection is less obvious, but in the *Young Garden* (1927), for example, it is still discernible,

although there is now the added comparison of a child's schematic representation.

In other pictures Klee makes use of forms which have their clear analogies in the pictorial renderings of schizophrenics and are probably derived from this source: Characteristic are the extension of the human features, especially the eyes and the mouth, into ornamental linear motives which are then, in neglect of the original intention, elaborated for their own decorative value; the use of a close all-over pattern made up either of dots or of a minute linear scheme which the eye cannot follow in detail, and designed in such a way that the eye has equal and yet exact demands on its attention from the whole picture surface, thus creating a tremendous strain; the repetition of the face in other parts of the body.⁶ In the *Dressed Doll* (1922) the eyes, ears, and elbows expand into symmetrical scrolls, while in the *Angelus Novus* (1920) hair, hands, and feet undergo a similar evolution. Different versions of the all-over technique are to be found in the *Woman and Beast* (1904) and *Hero with the Wing* (1905), both using small wavy lines that give the impression of stripped flesh, and *Scene from a Drama* (1923) which has also something of the schizophrenic renderings of the features.⁷ Examples of distortions of the human form which, while keeping the connection of the parts pull and stretch them in all directions, but without a single visual principle, as if seen through several distorting mirrors at once, also common in lunatic productions, are to be found in the *Boy in a Fur* (1909), and combined with cubist influence in the *Fool* (1924) and *Fool in a Trance* (1929). *Introducing the Miracle* (1916) employs child-drawn figures in a setting inspired by the cubist use of planes and facets, but with the deliberate destruction of a unifying scale. (Fig. 56.) It is important to remember, however, that these affinities occur only in a limited number of Klee's pictures: that, in other words, he is exercising a power of choice for certain controlled symbolic ends, as we will see

below; while in the work of madmen these forms are compulsory, and are considered by them as exact representations of particular events.^{7a}

The affiliations of others of Klee's pictures to the art of children are easier to define. They have in common with the "second stage" of child art, the period which follows the purely mechanical, motor scribbling of lines, what has been described as intellectual realism.⁸ This kind of representation is opposed to visual realism in that it is composed of the inclusion of those features of an object which are considered important and which are *known* to be part of it, regardless of whether they could all be visually present together at the same time. (Fig. 54.) This is a stage of artistic formulation through which all children apparently pass, until in response to some form of pressure from the established tradition they begin to turn to visual representation; and it is a stage at which many primitive people, for example the Dayaks of Bornea and the tribes of north-western Australia, have remained, although others, as the Bushmen, may never have passed through it at all.⁹ It has in common with certain schizophrenic representations the disregard of natural proportions in favor of the exaggeration of those features of the object conceived of as important, but it differs in that there is a unifying principle logically carried through, and consequently no trailing off into chance associative elements (chance that is, to the outsider), or purely decorative schematizations. Because Klee is making use of such "intellectual realism" upon a selective basis, and with conscious intent, viewing his result as an aesthetic object and not only as the representation of the conceptual idea of a scene, he necessarily never carries it out completely: there is always some modification in the interests of pattern, an effect which is purely fortuitous in the production of the child, and noticed indeed, only by the adult observer. Nevertheless the influence of this art is apparent in many of Klee's pictures, of which the *Zoo* (1928), and *She Roars, We*

Play (1928) are perhaps the best known. These use a linear technique, akin to that of children's drawings in its description of the objects, although narrower and finer. But other of Klee's work is closer to the following stage of child development, that of the beginning of visual representation. In the flow of their contrasting colors into one another, and the square full-view crudity of their representation, *The Smoker* and the *Jumping Jack* have an obvious relation to children's water-colors, while others derive from a similar stage of child drawing. These influences are not always clear cut: *Greeks and Barbarians* has in it elements of early medieval manuscript depiction, particularly in the central figure, as well as the influence of childish forms.¹⁰ Because of such mixtures, which we can still recognize, and of compounds, which we can only infer, as well as the factor of choice and elimination, motive by motive comparisons with individual child pictures are not very fruitful; yet analogies can continually be pointed out, even though identities are hard to find.

So to catalogue Klee's borrowings and adaptations from the primitive does not define his attitude toward the originals, the use he makes of them, or his reasons for both. All these become somewhat clearer upon an examination of the *Paedagogisches Skizzenbuch*, written presumably to enlighten his students as to his method and intention.¹¹ We have mentioned above that in its animistic method, whereby lines are in themselves "active" and "passive," a division proper to the whole universe, and the "father of the arrow is the thought," while earth, air, and water are made symbols of the states of the soul, this book resembles Kandinsky's writing, and its symbolic-mystic intention is much the same.¹² But the symbols which Klee chooses to make the letters of his graphic alphabet, since they borrow less from conventional geometric forms for which a universal harmony is found, and depend more on Klee's own graphic invention and on certain deliberately arbitrary units, of which the arrow

is most important, are both more intellectual, and more personal and mystifying than those of Kandinsky. Where Kandinsky talks only of the qualities inherent in colors, lines, and geometric forms, giving them an existence of their own which the acute observer can catch and reflect, Klee unites them directly with human thought and human emotion: "Art plays an unconscious game with ultimate things, and achieves them nevertheless."¹³ He talks of the combination of the conscious and the unconscious mind, and his biographers of the recapture of the world through childish intuition.¹⁴ His mysticism has in it something of Marc's desire to unite with the world on the level of animal and plant life, and in this he has been properly connected with the German Romanticists by whom, as we have mentioned above, he was influenced early in his career.¹⁵

It has been remarked that the expression of such a mystic unity in plastic terms is impossible of achievement since its only complete formulation must be a complete lack of formulation.¹⁶ We may nevertheless examine with what means Klee makes the attempt. It is significant that although Klee borrows much from the child, contrary to childish practice he is careful to leave his figures indeterminate and his scenes unlocalized. His linear sketches, small in comparison to their frames, are surrounded by a field undifferentiated except for delicate color nuances, and defining no limited spatial setting. The figures, put thus into a void or onto an unlimited plane, have themselves no volume, and no spatial or psychological relation to each other. It is not only the figure of the *Jumping Jack* that floats in space as it should, but also the various parts of the *Landscape with the Child*, the *Knowledge of a Child*, and *The Flower Eater*. In these canvases, as in the *Picture with Descending Pigeon*, Klee makes of the child's inability to render perspective a deliberate and calculated abstraction "which shatters habitual values in vision."¹⁷ Through the reduction of the rendering of the objects he makes their reference unspecifiable, and by floating

them in a vague plane he then causes meanings which would otherwise be resented as purely private to have unlimited reference and importance. Here, as with the meaning of much abstract geometrical art, vagueness is equated with generality, but in this case the emotional tone is heightened by its concentration upon a scene which specifies the unrelated details of purely symbolic objects. This effect is moreover increased by the titles of the pictures which, instead of giving us the expected explanation, that is, relating the separated objects of the canvas by indicating some common frame of reference, are instead repetitions of its obvious parts, re-enumerating in print what has already been separately set down in paint. In this manner the mystification concerning the significance of the scene is increased for the observer, since it is apparently meant to be obvious and yet is not, and just for this reason takes on added importance. Thus the spectator is forced, rather than neglect the connotations of these private symbols, to supply his own, and since the denotation furnished by Klee does not limit his fancy, he may extend without end the personal meanings suggested by *his own* associations. In this way, if one is willing to forego any checking of the observer's result with the artist's original intention, it is possible to say that Klee has attained his end, and has rendered "cosmic world feeling."

It is of course not accidental that Klee should have made use of children's symbols for the furtherance of his method. But their use has little to do with the achievement of a "naïveté of vision" through the writing of that "cosmic picture-book" which is mentioned in connection with his art.¹⁸ The subtle gradations of color, the constantly changing and carefully calculated harmonies of his painting are those of a highly sophisticated vision and technique. Much of the effect of his pictures comes from the divorce of these harmonies from the apparently casual placing of the forms represented, increasing the apparent spontaneity of the creation and the

indefiniteness of its meanings.¹⁹ Childish forms are used rather because they lend themselves to this, because though they are common symbols which should be intelligible on a low level to every one, they can, in the abstract manner in which Klee has employed them, have private and varying meanings attached to them. Since each observer will supply his own, they will necessarily seem important to him, and the painter is thus freed from the necessity of establishing contact on direct and commonly meaningful ground. We have remarked in connection with a similar process in geometric abstraction, that it must on one side lead away from the simplification which the painter desires.²⁰ Here this is true not alone of the immediate effects of color and form that have been used, whose subtlety needs no stressing; it is also true of their suggestions, which require a self-conscious imagination. Perhaps more than any other, this kind of primitivizing through simplification of the separate elements of representation (but not of their plastic relations), needs an acute, educated, and extremely subtle refinement of sensibility for its appreciation.

Notes:

The Child Cult

¹ See above, Chapter I, Part II; as well as for a coincidental change in interest on the part of German ethnologists.

² Klee knew the *Blaue Reiter* artists in Munich in 1911, at which time he also learned of Matisse's painting.

³ Dufy and Chagall have been discussed above; though related to children's work only in an indirect, humorous manner, Dufy's painting would be impossible without an appreciation of it. Itten and Lascaux are "false primitives"; Masson uses children's subjects on occasion; for Picasso cf. his *La Catalane* (1911), which uses a humorous adaptation of child technique.

⁴ Museum of Modern Art, *Paul Klee* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1930), p. 9. Cf. the dance masks of the Basonge, with their horizontal stripings.

⁵ These designs are made by a system of block printing, more rarely are done by hand.

- ⁶ Cf. Prinzhorn, Hans (*Bildnerei der Geisteskranken* (Berlin: Springer, 1923), pp. 65, 85, 246. Madmen's drawings, even within the same malady, are far from being uniform.
- ⁷ For comparisons of the *Hero*, Prinzhorn, *op. cit.*, p. 60, and Plate II; for the *Scene*, p. 100, and Plate III. The etchings also show some influence of the revival of German sixteenth century work which we have mentioned in connection with the phenomena of German primitivism; see above, Chapter IV.
- ⁸ Feininger also places childishly composed forms in a space derived from the cubist treatment of planes. His infant ships, however, are diminished and simplified to increase the vastness and the romance of the surrounding sea. (Fig. 57.)
- ⁹ Luquet, G.-H., *The Art and Religion of Fossil Man* (Paris: Masson, 1930), pp. 72-73.
- ¹⁰ The reasons for this division have not yet been found; the commonest explanation is a difference in way of life, but this does not cover all cases. Cf. Kuehn, Herbert, *Die Kunst der Primitiven* (Munich: Delphin-Verlag, 1923).
- ¹¹ Cf. Klee's admiration for Byzantine art on his trip to Italy in 1901, Crevel, René, *Klee* (Paris: Editions N.R.F., 1930), p. 5.
- ¹² Klee, Paul, *Paedagogisches Skizzenbuch* (Munich: Albert Langen, 1925) (Bauhausbuecher 2).
- ¹³ See above, Chapter IV.
- ¹⁴ Quoted in Zahn, Leopold, *Paul Klee. Leben, Werk, Geist* (Potsdam: Kiepenhauer, 1920), p. 23.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 9.
- ¹⁶ The influence on Klee of Christian Morgenstern has been mentioned in Chapter IV. Zahn, *op. cit.*, p. 4, draws a parallel with the work of Carus.
- ¹⁷ Klein, Jerome, "The Line of Introversion," *The New Freeman*, I (1930), 88-89:
 "But can there possibly be an artistic formulation which is the *equivalent* of mystic vision? The essence of mysticism is the perception of unity, undifferentiated oneness, which is equivalent to formlessness."
- ¹⁸ *Loc. cit.*
- ¹⁹ Zahn, *op. cit.*, p. 24.
- ²⁰ We do not mean to imply that Klee is not sincere in his work; artistically, however, his effects are calculated ones.
- ²¹ See above, Chapter V.

DADA AND SURREALISM

In tracing the idea of primitivism in its various manifestations, and in indicating the relationship of modern painting to primitive art, we have endeavored to keep distinct the professed program of the different artists and schools and the manner in which that

program has been carried out in their pictures. Any discussion of the primitivism of the surrealists makes this distinction more than ever necessary, because with them we reach an attitude toward the subconscious, in other words toward indigenous and personal primitive elements, which is by definition such that its results cannot coincide with its intention. It is not possible here to enter into a detailed psychological analysis either of the surrealist attitude toward the psychiatric and psychoanalytic theories from which they derive their desire for the expression of the submerged nine-tenths of the iceberg of the human mind, or of many of the individual pictures which have resulted from it. Whatever may be, in any particular case, the degree of assimilation of these theories, it must be clear that as soon as surrealism abandoned that definition of itself as "pure psychic automatism" which characterized its *temps héroïque* from 1919 to 1923 (if not even before), and adopted a position of the conscious use of the processes of the unconscious, its results were necessarily at variance with the psychological theories from which it pretended to get its validity.¹ Dali asserts that he has no notion of the meaning of certain of his pictures when he paints them and is not able to explain them when they are finished (*i.e.*, they are automatic). This position is contradicted by his literary activity concerning them, by the compositions themselves and the titles he gives to them, and by the "paranoiac-critical" method. But unless we are willing to accept it generally we must accord him a kind of self-analysis and control of his own subconscious which no psychoanalyst would accept as genuine, and which in itself does away with the free association and free expression of a portion of the mind whose value according to the surrealist doctrine lies precisely in its uncontrollability.² As soon as the double character of what Dali, in a confusion of two types of mental obsession calls a "paranoiac" image, is recognized as such, and strictly speaking this can be done whether by artist or spectator only in his capacity as investigator, its value

as direct expression of the subconscious is immediately destroyed; while a subconscious recognition (accepting for a moment its possibility) can come only from the extremely limited number of people whose "delusions" parallel those of the artist.³

The surrealists themselves consider their own method and art in a light which we may call primitivist under three different aspects: In the first place they look upon themselves as the sole inheritors and continuators of that tradition of romanticism characterized by the work of the Marquis de Sade and his followers on the one hand and the Gothic romances on the other. This tradition they see as having "wished to give back to civilized man the force of his primitive instincts," either directly, as with Sade, or by disguising itself in exotic or historical fantasy in order to delve into emotions which for social and wrongly moral reasons had more recently been overlaid with a surface of manners, but which nevertheless are basic in the make up of every human being.⁴ The connection of the horror and fantasy of these authors with the sexual bases of human conduct, rarely consciously recognized by them, is a link which the surrealists themselves establish and emphasize. The tradition is largely literary, although André Breton at one time tried to extend it back into the history of art; and its most outstanding pictorial example is the use made by Dali of the (to us) generally morbid atmosphere and the technique of Arnold Boecklin.⁵

In the second place the surrealists see themselves as beginners, as pioneer explorers in the realm of the subconscious, a field which they are the first to investigate by artistic means. It is nevertheless not quite clear whether they consider their investigations works of art or not—"painting, literature—what are they to us," says Breton—but in any case others will continue the discovery of the "future continent" which they have begun, eventually making their work, whatever its apparent present complication, seem crude and primi-

tive by comparison.⁶ This crudity, however, only adds to the impact and the importance of their productions:

"But all question of emotion for emotion's sake apart, let us not forget that in this epoch it is reality itself that is in question. How can anyone expect us to be satisfied with the passing disquiet that such and such a work of art brings us? There is no work of art that can hold its own before our essential *primitivism* in this respect."⁷

And lastly, and for our purposes this is the most important, the surrealists consider that they are working with the essentials of human nature as finally revealed by psychology. Taking a position similar to attitudes which we have already discussed, they assume that such a preoccupation in itself gives their work importance. They value an exclusive concentration upon the imagination just because by this method it is rendered no longer imaginative, that is unreal, but becomes the sole reality, good in itself, which it is the task of their work to reveal.⁸ More than this, however, and this again is in line with the theories of other movements, they consider that by this very concentration their work is necessarily intelligible to a larger audience than is the case with other art forms. They feel that because they are dealing with emotional elements which are both common to every one and powerful in each individual, their work instead of uselessly "embroidering" upon unimportant emotional nuances, is bound to be not merely of interest but also immediately comprehensible to all.⁹ Indeed, in a carry over of the "intuitive" epoch of surrealism, when their art tried to free itself of the external controls of traditional conception and technique in what was a turning inward of the reaction against accepted "art" forms which the dadists (in extension of the *papiers collés* of Braque and Picasso) had expressed by the use of "ready-made" materials, they claim that surrealist objects may be produced, or found, which is the same, by anyone.¹⁰ The most recent numerical and geographical extensions of the movement are justified by them upon these grounds,

with the intent of creating a universal art, although this very expansion and its necessity would seem to indicate the extremely personal, rather than the common, character of the new art form.¹¹

As has been just suggested, the primitivist tendency of dada lay in its destructive conviction that no acquired technique is necessary for the creation of works of art. Behind its pranks, both artistic and social, was the notion that it is the internal factor which alone counts in either realm, whereas the world has put its faith solely in the external.¹² Though this made the dadaists sympathetic to the work of children and of madmen as direct expressions of inner feeling, their own few productions are of a highly allusive character: Rather than ignoring the art they wish to destroy, they refer to it through startling juxtapositions of form or content, and in consequence their creations are of an extreme sophistication and have a minimum of directness and simplicity.¹³

To ask whether or not the surrealist result, as it is embodied in the paintings of such men as Dali, Tanguy, Magritte, and Max Ernst, is primitive in its effect is to be, even more strikingly than concerning other schools of modern art, entirely irrelevant. We may nevertheless note what we have already indicated must be so for logical reasons: a complication of form and subject matter which makes their work anything but easily digestible—always excepting that purely intuitive comprehension about which there can be no argument. The subjects, including as they do references to Freudian theory intelligible only to those conversant with it, necessarily become rather specialized, being lifted from the plane of psychological elements common to all to the restricted one of the explanation of those elements. As we have pointed out in the case of abstract art, the lifting into consciousness and the concentration upon things whose effect was formerly subconscious, instead of increasing that effect merely removes it from the direct emotional plane to the allusive and the literary.¹⁴ What was previously the psychological ex-

planation of a work now becomes its subject. Since in the surrealist pictures this change carries with it a whole body of complicated theory whereas in abstract art it is concerned only with geometrical form, the effect is that much more completely destroyed. Thus if he takes them seriously, Dali's watches and flies affect the beholder conversant with Freud in the same way as a case history affects a psychoanalyst; otherwise they become mere curios of technique.¹⁵ In either case the observer's conscious attention is occupied in reconstituting the iconography of the picture, establishing a connection between parts whose relationship, upon the surrealists' own assumptions, can be emotionally effective only on a subconscious level. The necessarily detailed manner of examination which thus results is moreover aggravated by the surrealists' method of exact depiction of individual objects, using various established technical methods of the past to lend reality to the unreal by an overminute rendering of detail. They thereby add the pleasure of recognition to the shock of unexpected juxtaposition, but never, as in the true metaphor, whether conscious or subconscious, really combine the two. Thus the "surrealist" level, at which "real" and "unreal" fuse and lose their meaning, is never reached. Further, the inclusion of actual erotic objects within the picture, or at least their representation in such a fashion that they are not sufficiently removed from the originals to be called symbols for the conscious, and surely not for the censored subconscious mind, means not only that the supposedly scientific basis of the iconography has been upset by the confusion of two levels of the mind, but, once more, that there can be no question of an intuitive grasp of the picture's meaning: the kind of recognition to which the spectator is always forced is proper to the practitioner, but not to his patient.¹⁶

Coupled with the minute handling of detail of which we have spoken is the placing of small objects in vast flat expanses, the use of a distant horizon and much sky, the extension of space parallel to the picture plane, and the exaggeration of perspective so that the

eye sees into immense distances. While recognizing in these methods an attempt to reproduce the unlimited dream spaces of the mind, we may nevertheless point out that they derive from painters who were consciously engaged in the representation of the exotic, whether with oriental and tropical overtones, as in the case of Meissonier (from whom Dali's smaller pictures stem), or, as in the pictures of Boecklin, with romantic-classical and archaizing suggestions.¹⁷ The surrealists, however, in spite of the accuracy of their detail, further diminish the already vague localizations of these painters, and further emphasize the almost infinite distance of the source of illumination. By these means they increase the overtones of symbolic importance, adding suggestions of meanings which are never specifically indicated, and whose possibly great significance, never given within the picture itself, is—as we have noted with Klee—emphasized by the deliberate obliqueness of the titles which are given to it.

It is not possible, then, to discover in the more narrowly surrealist paintings any primitivist result, either of form or of direct psychological content; indeed they make deliberate use of all the external over-sophistication and decadent complication of manners and meanings which they profess to deplore and to be intent upon destroying.¹⁸ In that intention, and in its avowed method, however, we may discover certain primitivist tendencies connected with others which we have discussed. The connection between children's art and the intuitive phase of surrealism has been mentioned above, as well as the dadaist and early surrealist emphasis upon the primitive inner sources of inspiration which parallels Kandinsky's appreciation of and his wish to emulate children's art. In the sexual and "paranoiac" subject matter of later surrealism we see an attempt to find important and generally compelling themes of which to treat, themes which will capture the attention of the individual and still be comprehensible to a large public. As we have already remarked, this is not in itself a primitivist aim; what makes it so is that it is carried out by what is

supposed to be a return to primitive and basic psychological factors, by an omission of the new and intricate, but nevertheless common objects and situations whose inclusion would be another method of achieving the same end. They thus arrive at an exclusive emphasis upon the internal motivation of their art which, lacking any interplay with external factors must obtain its ostensible justification by driving deeper and deeper into the pervasive foundations of the mind.¹⁹ The assumption that this process will automatically increase the vitality of their art, and by this same token its audience, is one that, with variations, we have noted before. It is indicative of the primitivist orientation and tendency which runs through a great deal of modern painting. Though here as elsewhere the desired end is not attained, and the divergence is perhaps greater than in the case of any other school we have discussed, the existence of the aim brings the surrealist movement within the scope of our present study.

Note: The work of Roux, Masson and of Miro has not been included in the preceding analysis because, although often included as surrealists (as is Picasso), they do not belong to the school proper, and their primitivism is not of that school. Their painting does, however, contain primitivist elements. In the art of Roux it comes out most strongly in his ferocious assimilation of animal and human forms, his attribution of animal shapes to human beings, and his endowment of animals with the unpleasanter human emotions. The former is the case with *The Pirates* (1929), the latter in *Animals Fighting over an Egg* (1928); although in many cases the two are combined in such a way as to create a lower, highly obnoxious, yet revealing and disillusioning order of humanity. Masson's work has in it something of these influences (*Animals Devouring Themselves* (1928)), but also shows the effect of infantile and psychiatric line drawing, as in the *Battle of the Fishes* (1927), or *Fishes Drawn on the Sand* (1927).

Joan Miro's painting shows, in its various phases, four different

kinds of primitivizing influences: The first is that of popular and provincial art of the late nineteenth century, evident for example in the little horse and the wall decorations included in *The Horse, The Pipe, and the Red Flower* (1920), and in the composition as well as the objects of *Table with Pitcher, Glove and Cane* (1921). (Cf. the imitation wood-cuts of John Held Jr. for a similar adaptation.) The famous *Farm* (1922) has in it derivations from children's art, from the painting of the modern primitives, and from provincial art. Its flatness and intellectual addition of known objects, the hard tropical foliage of its background, and the ornamental stylizations of its foreground tree exhibit these influences; all put together with a humor and spontaneity characteristic of Miro but rare among the surrealists. The fourth influence is that of prehistoric art as it is found in its Epipalaeolithic (Azilean) phase in the conventionalised human forms of rock paintings or the decorated pebbles from Mas d'Azil. The curiously shaped little forms and bright, divided coloring are clearly reminiscent of these designs, as is the free, apparently haphazard manner in which they are distributed over the surface of the canvas. (Fig. 58.)

Notes:

Dada and Surrealism

¹ See the definition given by Breton in the *Manifeste du Surréalisme* in 1924, and quoted by him in *What Is Surrealism?* Translated by Gascoyne, David (London: Faber and Faber, 1936), p. 59:

"SURREALISM, n. Pure psychic automatism, by which it is intended to express, verbally, in writing, or by other means, the real process of thought. Thought's dictation, in the absence of all control exercised by the reason and outside all aesthetic or moral preoccupations."

The second epoch Breton calls the "reasoning" one. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

² Dali, Salvador, *Conquest of the Irrational* (New York: Julien Levy, 1935), *passim*. Despite definitions, it is difficult to ascertain in just what (in practice) the "paranoiac-critical" control of the mind consists. I realize, of course, that any demand for consistency is hopelessly pedestrian and un-surrealist.

³ The double "paranoiac" interpretation of events is almost always associated in the combined delusions of persecution-grandeur. In giving the second interpretation of

their images an exclusively sexual character they are themselves guilty of a *neurotic* obsession.

⁴ Eluard, Paul, "Poetic Evidence," in *Surrealism*. Edited by Read, Herbert (London: Faber and Faber, 1936), p. 177. Also Breton, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

⁵ Breton, André, *Le surréalisme et la peinture* (Paris: Gallimard, 1928), p. 42. Breton has since tried to get rid of this link with the past which he himself at first used for justification.

⁶ Breton, *What Is Surrealism?*, p. 17.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁸ Breton, *op. cit.*, p. 65: "The admirable thing about the fantastic is that it is no longer fantastic: there is only the real."

⁹ Breton, *op. cit.*, p. 13. This is Dali's reason for establishing his "critical" method in order to get rid of difficult Freudian interpretations which have a "vast margin of enigma, especially to the great public." Dali, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

¹⁰ This is in line with the notion that Read, *op. cit.*, p. 63, expounds that aesthetic values "do not belong so much to the paint as to the person."

¹¹ Cf. recent exhibitions in Teneriffe, Prague, Leicester, London, New York, and Tokio.

¹² Arthur Cravan's hanging of an empty picture-frame in the Luxembourg in 1914 is the classic dada gesture (carried out before the creation of dada) against the accepted notion of art. Cf. Hugnet, Georges, "L'esprit dada dans la peinture," *Cahiers d'art*, IX (1934), 109. The surrealists are still carrying on the rather outworn fight against "The very narrow conception of imitation which art has been given as its aim." Breton, *loc. cit.*

¹³ E.g., *Fatagaga of Arp and Ernst*, *Ernst's La Femme 100 Têtes*, Duchamp's signature of "R. Mutt" to his *Fontaine* (1917), the decorations of Leonardo's paintings, and finally Kurt Schwitters's *Merzbilder*. This was a necessary concomitant of dada's purely destructive character, its attempt to be more mad than the mad.

¹⁴ See above, Chapter V.

¹⁵ E.g., *Illuminated Pleasures* (1929), *The Persistence of Memory* (1931), *Atmospheric Skull Sodomizing a Grand Piano* (1934). Dali's "critical" method does not destroy this aspect.

¹⁶ E.g., *The Enigma of William Tell* (1934), *The Invisible, Fine, and Average Harp* (1933), *Average Atmosphericocephalic Bureaucrat in the Act of Milking a Cranial Harp* (1933).

¹⁷ E.g., Dali's *Apparition on the Beach at Rosas* (1934), and *Mediumistic-paranoiac Instantaneousness* (1934) for Meissonier coloring and lighting; the first picture, as well as *Surrealist Object Indicating Instantaneous Memory* have suggestions of Boecklin. Tanguy's pictures also have these characteristics.

¹⁸ We have not discussed "allied" artists such as Arp and Miro, and certain phases of Picasso, because they have not identified themselves with the surrealist program.

¹⁹ This is all the more striking in view of the surrealist's revolutionary tendencies which should make them partial to a representation of just such recent social and technical innovations.

CHAPTER VII

A DEFINITION OF PRIMITIVISM

“these approximate terms have a value. . . .”

IN ATTEMPTING a definition of the artistic attitude which we have been engaged in studying we do not mean to set down an exclusive description. It would be possible to collect the final residue left after filtering out all those manifestations which are not common or typical, or which may be found accompanying other attitudes in art besides the primitivist, no matter how important or characteristic they may be for certain phases of primitivism, and this meagre residue could then be reduced to an epigram. Such an attempt, though it might arrive at a paradigm which would serve as a home base in the hunt for exceptions, would hardly find any other useful purpose. It will have been obvious throughout our study that whatever unity it possessed lay in the various attitudes and intentions which were being described rather than in the formal, or even the psychological similarity of the works of art resulting from the application of these attitudes. And it will have become clear that, in detail at least, the attitudes and intentions also, conditioned as they were by their immediate cultural and artistic situation as well as by the larger factors common to them all, varied among themselves. The purpose of this final chapter is therefore to summarize the different phenomena of our essay while preserving their individuality; to rewind in comparative haste the connecting thread we have been unravelling so slowly.

But if this thread is not in the art nor in its theoretical program, where can it be? We think it is possible to say, without being guilty of any more primitivism of analysis than comes from an adaptation

to our subject, that it lies in a *common assumption* that pervades the pictures and their apologetics. This is the assumption that externals, whether those of a social or cultural group, of individual psychology, or of the physical world, are intricate and complicated and *as such not desirable*. It is the assumption that any reaching under the surface, if only it is carried far enough and proceeds according to the proper method, will reveal something "simple" and basic which because of its very fundamentality and simplicity will be more emotionally compelling than the superficial variations of the surface; and finally that the qualities of simplicity and basicness are things to be valued in and for themselves: In other words it is the assumption that the further one goes back—historically, psychologically, or aesthetically—the simpler things become; and that because they are simpler they are more interesting, more important, and more valuable. Certainly we have seen that this "simplicity"—even in the rare cases in which it is found—varies with the nature of the seekers. But (since it is primitivism and not the primitive we have been studying), its axiomatic existence and desirability remain.

Primitivism presupposes the primitive, and at the core of an artistic primitivism we may expect to find a nucleus of "primitive" works of art. In the case of each of the divisions we have made—the romantic, the emotional, and the intellectual or formal, there were works of art considered primitive by the modern artists, and appreciated and influential because of that. Without going into the question of what the *really primitive* is, the paleolithic or the neolithic, the African or the Eskimo, we may note that in accordance with the primitivist assumption we have just described these supposedly primitive arts are not united by any common qualities of form and composition. This is evident from their variety: For Gauguin they were the Egyptian, the Indian, and the Polynesian alike; for the *fauves* the "curious" phases of African sculpture and the *images d'Epinal*; for the *Brücke* and the *Blaue Reiter* the sculpture of the exotic peoples generally, the draw-

ings of children and their own provincial folk art; while for Picasso primitive meant Ivory Coast sculpture and the painting of Henri Rousseau. This is to say that at least in relation to our subject and for the artists whom we have considered the primitiveness of these different arts lay in the common quality of simplicity attributed to them. More psychological than formal, it was a quality read into the objects rather than objectively observed and so bound to vary with the orientation of each group. The possibility of finding such simplicity in any form of aboriginal art, no matter how formally complicated it might be, was of course facilitated by an assumption inherited from the nineteenth century, still continuing though often avowedly rejected. This was the correlation automatically made between the simplicity of the physical and social organisation of a people and the simplicity (in both the senses of unvariegated and whole-hearted) of the import of their works of art. In the case of child and folk art it was based upon an appreciation of psychological beginnings. Far from being the cause of the primitiveness of modern painting, primitive art only served as a kind of stimulating focus, a catalytic which, though not used or borrowed from itself, still helped the artists to formulate their own aims because they could attribute to it the qualities they themselves sought to attain. For these reasons the very limited direct formal influence of primitive art is not to be wondered at; the causal action is indeed rather the reverse. Even the use of aboriginal art as an example to be quoted against the necessity of copying from nature and of following academic rules easily could have been dispensed with, since this process and protest in its modern form had begun before the discovery of primitive art in 1904. Consequently its continued reiteration as an example in favor of a return to "fundamentals" is but evidence of a more widespread primitivist drive.

For these reasons also the variety of arts valued as "primitive" is not surprising. It is not the first time in the history of modern art that a return to and an emulation of the primitive has been talked about,

and in terms of a return to fundamentals. These movements—notably those of the *Barbus*, the Nazarenes, and the Pre-Raphaelites—grew out of the historical consciousness of the nineteenth century, which at first (and as it affected them) had a religious tinge, but which later (and in the form which influenced ethnological investigation and artistic primitivism) supplanted this with a scientific, evolutionist aspect. Its search for beginnings was thus transformed from cultural to physical-emotional interests, and can properly be described as a search for “lower” instead of “higher” origins. In accordance with this change these artistic movements differed from this of the twentieth century in two important respects: First, there was an evaluation of an objective style which had once been attained, a style belonging to one’s own tradition, one’s rightful heritage to which had been interrupted by interlopers who caused it to degenerate. This style was valued on the basis of its “abstract” qualities because it included more of the elements of a good art than any style which had come after it; and however “pure” it might be in its exclusion of bad artistic principles, was *not simplist* in its intention. Secondly, on the emotional side, these styles were considered to have a certain lyric quality, to embody the best of human sentiment and feeling within an easy harmony without regard to its relative fundamentality and intensity. During the nineteenth century the evaluation of “primitive” art has still something of the idea of a falling from grace of later styles. A previously attained perfection is destroyed by the welling up from beneath of things which should be kept suppressed, a combination of a cultural primitivism with the “decline theory” of chronological primitivism. The periods valued by the nineteenth century were high points in the past and were not thought of as folk arts in which medium and technical method did not count. Even in the imitative communal attempts of the Nazarenes or the Pre-Raphaelites the personality of the artist was at best only obliterated within the specialized artistic group. The arts valued by the twentieth century are exotic arts

in which it is imagined that technique has been kept properly subordinate by the intensity of the emotion expressed, or indigenous arts (those of the folk, children, and madmen) where, ideally, the medium would be obliterated in favor of a direct conveying of emotion. The contrast is forcibly brought out by the tremendous difference between attitudes of Paul Klee and Ph. O. Runge toward the child: In spite of similarities of verbal program and even identity of literary influences, the one is all sweetness and hope, the other all ferocity and irony. The fact that these arts are not of one's own tradition is in itself of value because it frees the individual and so makes his desired return to a single underlying intensity that much easier. The "sweetness and light" characteristic of the nineteenth century conception of what it called the primitive have now disappeared in favor of a real love of the savage, although this ferocity is often (as was an earlier notion of gentleness) only the product of a civilized imagination.

As the artists could select and appreciate different aspects of primitive art, so the primitivist elements which they chose to emphasize in their own work were varied. If we group those whom we have called romantic primitivists with those brought together as emotional, the primitivism we have examined falls into two large divisions: that whose main emphasis is on internal psychological factors, on the basic elements of human experience; and that which sought out the fundamental factors of external form, the bases of human perception and of nature. Within the first group fall the artists who concentrated on the fundamental emotions and passions, on the crucial situations of life, using such events as the subject-matter of their pictures. This in itself would not make them primitivists; it is rather their desire to present these subjects immediately, with as little "psychic distance" as possible, to reduce the picture to a single, simple dominating scene which will not be analyzed as a variegated formal composition, but will absorb the spectator, or be absorbed by him in a direct and undifferentiated fashion. To this end they use technical means which, in

their broadness and coarseness, are supposed to be primitive. The scene presented may be either brutalised or idyllised; in either case it is meant to be simple and dominating. This is as much the aim of the *fauves*, whose art is intended to be restful through its discarding of intellectual and formal complication, as it is that of the *Brücke*, who wish to overcome superficial differentiation by more forceful and stirring methods, or that of the *Blaue Reiter* artists who tend to sink complication in an identification with simpler, untroubled beings, whether animal or human. In the art of Gauguin the externality of the goal, proper to the romanticism behind him, is still present. But he has already exchanged the desire for a unity achieved on a higher level which characterises the romanticism of Delacroix, or for the golden age harmonious idyll belonging to early German romanticism (which has much in common with archaism), for a combination of the two which results in a ferocity (often erotic) which tries to, but never succeeds in dominating the emotional tone of his pictures: Grace still properly belonged to Gauguin's conception of the primitive, and to the pictures which were its result, but only in spite of himself. It is of some importance that the legend of Gauguin (as the legend of Van Gogh) should try to sink the sweetness of his pictures in the "savagery" of his life. Not that the sweetness is not appreciated, but that even now the public thinks it more proper to be wild than to be gentle.

The work of Gauguin also continues another quality which had already begun in the *Jugendstil* of which he is in some measure a part, that of the symbolism of the individual work of art. This symbolism is reached by the omission of such detail, in both formal and iconographic senses, as would particularize the situation presented in terms of the characters involved, and so would make it external, peculiar, and not susceptible of emotional identification by the spectator. Neither Gauguin's Bretons nor his Tahitians are individuals, nor are his landscapes particular spots in the countryside; they are symbols

of the simple man and his home. The scenes depicted by both the *fauves* and the *Brücke* have that strange "jungle" quality that results from a combination of close-up rendering with a formal and psychological generalisation. They have an immediate equatorial quality which differs sharply from the external tropicalising scenes of the previous French romanticists, scenes which preserve that "otherwhereness," the exterior goal to be pursued—here partly geographical, which is one of the characteristics of their art. The primitivizing picture is not a symbol in the sense of being the condensation of a developed intellectual conception—this requires minute, deliberately worked out characterization—but it attempts, by a reduction of the inner relations of the situation to their simplest, and by a broadening of their means of rendering so that detailed examination is not required, to expand its representation. The result is that while there is little definite reference outside the canvas, the emotional field within is both broad and simple. We need not emphasize how much this differs from aboriginal art, where the accurate representation of detail, in order that the external reference also shall be accurate and so effective, always controls the rendering of an emotional state, or its personification.

Both these characteristics—the immediate presentation of themes for direct absorption and the vague symbolic quality obtained by generalization—are carried over into the representation of nature, and from there lead, by a process of further iconographic rather than formal expansion, into abstract painting. In either case the result is a kind of symbolic animism, an attribution of independent life and activity to the forms of the canvas themselves, which are conceived both as paralleling human moods and as representing in miniature the moods of a whole living universe. For this development the works of Kandinsky and Klee are the outstanding examples. This sort of thinking bears a certain relationship to primitive notions of an animized world, but it is even closer to the survivals of these in later

mysticisms, with which it has stronger resemblances and from whose medieval, Indian, and early nineteenth century manifestations it was directly influenced. In common with such mysticism it has definite anti-intellectual and simplist leanings which are strengthened by its knowledge and preference for children's art and aboriginal art, and which from a philosophic point of view we are perhaps justified in calling primitivist in themselves. Moreover there is a continuing preference for a mystical sinking in the basic and fundamental rather than a union with the total climaxing unity of the world which at least makes for a "primitivizing mysticism"; and though Kandinsky has called this a necessary passing phase, the confusion between emotional primitivism and emotional pantheism has not yet been resolved entirely in favor of the latter.

The general development of primitivism within the work of those whom we have classified as having intellectual primitivist tendencies is in the same direction as that which has just been outlined. Though their relationship to primitive art is never of that purely analytical formal character which they attribute to it, they have nevertheless, notably in the case of Picasso, an appreciation of its interior structure and compositional arrangement with which the emotional primitivists never bothered. We have described the intellectuals as concentrating on the fundamental formal elements of human perception and of nature. The intention is to present these stripped of any limiting connection with an individual scene or object, in order that, by such omission, a class of perception instead of a single perception is realised, spectator and artist thus arriving at a direct appreciation of the factors upon which all true art has been built, but from which the superstructure has now for the first time been cleared away to bring them into a full and obvious light. The ultimate logical result of this aim is however not attained immediately, the process of expansion taking some time. At first the "class" is limited to certain similar enduring formal aspects of types of objects; and though the choice of these has

an apparent objective justification in a basic geometry which the painter tries to bring out, their particular relationship within the picture as well as the type of object which is chosen is peculiar to the individual artist, in conformity with the impressionist tradition from which the early development of cubism stemmed; and so the appeal of any picture was limited by its dependence upon the momentary realization of his sensibility. For this reason there is at times an apparently opposite development into particularization and intricacy which in certain instances retains the upper hand, as for example in the work of Georges Braque. And for the same reasons cubism was in a sense—in the light of the cubists' own declared ideals—a retrogression from the work of Cézanne and above all of Seurat, men whose manner of interpretation was intrinsically less limited. Nevertheless a gradual triple tendency of generalization is perceptible, the three aspects of which are of course not always carried out independently of one another:

The first of these is a continual extension and expansion of the type of object represented, its vaguer and vaguer iconographic definition, until all its qualities as object and even as type of object are lost, its formal and representational aspects are merged into one and it is impossible to tell (but not because of any unclarity of technique) what is geometry and what is subject-matter. At the same time there is an expansion and simplification of the form of the picture, details are eliminated and the scale becomes larger. This line of evolution begins with the work of Juan Gris, and continues through that of the purists, Ozenfant and Jeanneret, to its culmination in the artists of the *Effort Moderne*, notably Herbin and Valmier.

The second tendency deals more directly with the fundamental forms and formal relationships which interest the artist, these being made the subject-matter of his canvases. These forms are continually redefined and expanded until they include all those aspects, and eliminate all others, which are believed to be at the base of perception,

and to constitute the formal foundations of the world. Although the epistemological question is never clearly faced, the assumption seems to be that these exist independently, the artist's task being to embody them with as little personal distortion as possible rather than to project ideas which would otherwise not come into existence. In any case the problem, as it is shown in the works of Mondrian and Doesburg, is to exhibit them with as little superficial and extraneous matter as possible, presenting them simply and directly, with the characteristic assumption that they will then be comprehensible to all. But combined with the concentration on fundamental geometry as such is the idea that the forms thus reached are also at the base of a new technique and of a new aesthetic growing out of this technique, so that the forms are symbolic of a new content as well as being merely abstract fundamentals. Therefore at its limits this tendency meets the first, the former making its form its subject-matter, the latter identifying its subject-matter with its form.

The third process of generalization, and one which is in part shared by the later stages of emotional primitivism, is the reduction of the conscious factors of the artist's experience, factors which are considered to be necessarily peculiar to the individual artist, in favor of the substitution of subconscious factors which because they are subconscious and therefore uncontrollable will be common to many besides the artist himself. Thus by sinking back to a lower level of experience for its inspiration, art tries to become the expression of the basic qualities of the human mind, qualities which are primitive both in the sense of being pervasive and of possessing the savage power of occasionally overwhelming the more refined levels of the mind. What is particularly primitivist is that this should now be thought desirable. By the nature of their inspiration form and subject-matter merge into one, since the former is always given a symbolic meaning, but this union is stronger in those pictures which are under the influence of children's art (Klee) or of previous abstract art (Miro) than in those

(Dali) which make use of the accurate representation of realistic (although not necessarily real) objects given a double significance.

To sum up this outline, it can perhaps be said that primitivism tends to expand the metaphor of art—by which is meant a well-defined object-form with a definite, precise, and limited, if intricate, reference—until either by formal simplification, symbolic iconographic generalization, or both, it becomes a symbol of universal reference, and that this process is possible only on the basis of the primitivist assumption which has been stated above. There is here an obvious difference from “primitive” art, that is the art of the aboriginal peoples, in which either the symbol and its reference are identical, as in the case of the true “fetish,” or in which the reference, although imminent and powerful and perhaps not altogether clear in its formulation, is nevertheless limited, and in which the symbol, in order to be effective, must always be accurate. It is, moreover, instructive as to the combined difficulty and persistence of the primitivist impulse, that its expansion should never have been carried through by any one artist; in each case it has been taken up where others have desisted.

It will perhaps be clarifying to distinguish primitivism from two other artistic tendencies of the nineteenth century to which it bears certain resemblances. In giving these descriptions we do not mean to give absolute formulas, nor to imply that even within modern painting is it possible to find perfect, unadulterated instances of their exemplification; but since *primitivism* in part stems from *archaism* and *romanticism*, and in any case is of the same order, these concepts will perhaps serve as points of reference for the clearer distinction of the characteristics of primitivism. Both archaism and romanticism are attempts to infuse new life into art by breaking away from the current and accepted formulas, and both, though in different ways, try to renew the *essentials* of art, as does primitivism. Archaism (as it is found in the Nazarene and Pre-Raphaelite movements) is also

similar to primitivism in that it goes back to an earlier art for its inspiration, but, since it considers the epoch it has picked, which technically it realizes and appreciates as a beginning one, as the highest point which art in *its expression* has reached, it sticks formally closer to this art than does primitivism. Moreover the works which it admires and copies are considered to be in its own cultural tradition, a style whose freshness lies in its suggestion of a later, too full-blown flowering, and whose charm lies in its restraint when compared to this now well-known later period. In the same way the content which is conveyed by this form has only a verbal or an arbitrary meaning, verbal because it belongs to a taught tradition, arbitrary because it no longer has an immediate emotional meaning and is significant only in fitting into a preconceived, artificially limited ideal. As part of the appeal of this ideal lies in its familiarity, so in conformity with it archaism strives for a clear-cut formal restatement of its own art which it tries to renew by means of an omission whose basis is the retainment of only those elements of style which an earlier period has included; but, because of its knowledge of later developments to which indirect reference is not only inevitable but necessary for the archaistic ideal, it cannot help giving to these early elements an extreme precision and a calculated refinement which results in a geometric quality not found in the work imitated, and in a substitution of knowing restraint for a sincere naïveté.

Romanticism, on the other hand (as it is best exemplified in the work of Delacroix), in contrast to archaism and in common with primitivism, has an anti-intellectual attitude and a desire for an intensity of emotion. It characteristically takes its inspiration from works belonging to cultures, or directly from cultures which it considers as *other* than itself, that is of an historical, geographical or literary distance productive of an emotional distance, and which provide anecdotal subject-matter or new formal experiences susceptible of intense emotional concentration and assimilation. In order to fulfill

this latter condition it is necessary that the subject-matter be not entirely foreign, so that it may be possible to interpret it in terms of the exaggeration of features of ordinary life, and that their violence and intensity may be appreciated in comparison with this admittedly dull norm. The emotions which romanticism thus manages to achieve it values for their intensity and their momentary exclusiveness, for their ability to absorb and engulf the whole personality for the time being. But in contrast to primitivism it is finally interested in the refinement and differentiation of many emotions, each of which is complicated within itself and which brings all the possibilities of personality into play; and thus, through this process of lifting by its own bootstraps (or rather pulling itself up by its own hands), in attaining the eventual development of a varied and self-conscious personality. The pursuit of romanticism's "flying goal" is therefore the opposite of primitivist in its effect, and it values exotic arts and exotic cultures in so far as, by the addition of new experiences which would not otherwise be realised, they contribute to the achievement of this ideal. For these reasons, which are similar to those of primitivism only in so far as they also prohibit the accurate seeing of exotic people, romanticism can do but little accurate borrowing from the arts of exotic cultures, and characteristically distorts them to fit its own notions; and whenever an approximately correct use of these arts occurs we may recognize the infiltration of archaistic ideas.

These are of course, even for the specialized area to which we have limited them, ideal descriptions. In most actual instances combinations occur, and we may have archaist-romanticism or primitivist-archaism. The latter, for example, would be the case with the earliest work of Ingres, in which there are certain truly primitivist elements which we may suppose more fully realized by the *Barbus*, whose desire to lose themselves in emotion was greater, but for whom also the archaistic ideals of clarity and grace are already paramount. On the other hand an archaistic romanticism is evident in the works of

the Nazarenes and the Pre-Raphaelites, where a mixture of the desire to purify one's sentiments and to increase the total volume of one's emotions occurs. It is prevalent also among the medievalists of the early nineteenth century, who treated an art which they claimed to value because it was their rightfully indigenous heritage and their own proper tradition in a romantic fashion as if it were exotic. In the same way, as our analysis of him showed, there are in the work of Gauguin mixtures of the archaist, the romantic, and the primitivist attitudes; while the mystical conceptions of Kandinsky and Klee and their ideas about the East and its arts are influenced by and still have certain affinities with the attitudes of an earlier romanticism. Nevertheless primitivism, in the particular and essential emphasis which it gives to phenomena also touched upon by archaism and romanticism, is distinguishable from them, and in the characteristics we have analyzed is a peculiar attribute of the art of the twentieth century.

It will also have been obvious from our analysis that primitivism is not static, either in the arts from which it takes its inspiration and with which it chooses to find kinship, or in its own pictorial results. Is it, however, possible to find any positive and continuous direction in the changes that have been observed? One tendency at least is clear: The primitivism of the twentieth century, that which began with Gauguin and received its greatest impetus in the simultaneous discovery of primitive sculpture in Germany and France, was at first incited and influenced by the lives of primitive peoples (or rather by its various ideas concerning them), and by their works of art. While the emphasis on the subject-matter selected or the formal qualities imitated varied with the school and artist, still the influence of one or the other is direct and perceptible. Gradually, however, a double change took place: The "primitive" works of art which provided inspiration began to be less exotic and removed and to come closer to home; children's art and folk art was at first mixed with the African and the Oceanic and similarities were found between them;

and then, with the addition of subconscious art considered under its primitive aspects, they entirely replaced the aboriginal productions. Secondly, the primitivist tendency created works which were now (even in the view of their authors) only theoretically related to the art of primitive peoples, but which sought to primitivise through the use of indigenous materials. This is to say that there is a double, if inter-related process of endemization, a process which is itself the natural result of two tendencies in modern art which we have mentioned in our discussion and which provided the setting for the possibility of primitivism, namely the tendencies of interiorization and expansion.

This brings us finally to the causes of the whole primitivist movement, a problem which we have thus far deliberately avoided since our purpose was to present the manifestations themselves in all their variety. But it may be well in closing to mention some of the contributing conditions of primitivism, in order to emphasize the fact which its very presentation must have shown, that primitivism is not an immanent artistic movement, self-born and self-borne, but that it grows from the general social and cultural setting of modern art and that it pervades, even where it does not dominate, a great deal of recent painting.

Our account of the growth of the ethnological museums, and of the opinions concerning the character and qualities of primitive art has indicated that knowledge of the aboriginal arts went hand in hand with the expansion of colonial empires. Quite apart from the initial discovery of territories, the possibilities of exploration and scientific documentation which their foundation created, the destruction of primitive religious practices, the forcible or agreeable removal of many cult objects; all these, simply by increasing the number of pieces available to European eyes, by permitting familiarity and comparison, took primitive art out of the class of the curio. The conquest of a Benin or the colonization of a Cameroon and the consequent

furnishing of the museums and of private collections did more than bring the art of these people to Europe: The collections were themselves part of an historical and comparative spirit long prevalent in the arts, a point of view which tended to isolate the individual object from its cultural setting in the same way as the contemporary artist was cut off from his own surroundings. Thus by bringing primitive art into the museum it could be assimilated to this spirit and studied as an historical manifestation, without any disturbing thoughts as to the very near reasons for its already being so remote. The assumption, common even at the beginning of the century, that the "better" pieces of primitive art must be the older ones, has perhaps another cause than the happy merging of theories of "decline primitivism" (ultimately religious in origin) from the artistic and the anthropological fields: It was comforting to suppose that the decline of the backward peoples had begun even before the assumption of the white man's burden. Or at least a primitive art should have something static about it; the idea that it may be developing or evolving (or that the peoples themselves may be changing) does not fit in with the notion of a simple, immemorial primitiveness.

These considerations in part explain why the art of Mexico and Central America, which was to be found in European museums long before anything from Africa and Oceania, should not even have been included within the general concept of primitive art. This omission had little to do with the actual difference in cultural level, which in many instances was little lower than in America (e.g., the Bakuba empire of the Congo, or the New Zealand Maori), and with which in any case only specialists were acquainted. It was perhaps partly due to the relative formal complication of the American arts, although even here there was often no great distinction. It may be explained chiefly, we think, by a difference in economic interest, due to the fact that the artistic tradition of these peoples had already been destroyed, and that their land was no longer subject to imperial conquest. As a

result, America was not included in that myth of simplicity (which still furnishes a handbook of "pre-logical mentality" to French colonial administrators), which provided the unconscious background of the artists' acceptance of the primitiveness of natives, and without which they could not have discovered the stimulus they were seeking from these arts.

The particular instance of the omission of America from their roster also confirms the fact that the interest in the primitive arts was something more than merely a last resort. While it is true that the nineteenth century had examined and made use of many historic periods and exotic styles, it would in any case be rash to conclude that the intrinsic possibilities of influence they contained had been exhausted. But we have here an objective check on the conclusion drawn from our analysis that the interest in the primitive arts was really (however mistakenly) a concern with the primitive and not just one more romantic exoticism. And it may be pertinent to remark that the last foreign style influence which preceded and mingled with the primitive was that of the Japanese print, the simplest and most popular of all Asiatic forms of expression, which besides reached Europe in its most vulgar examples.

The first book on children's art, published in Italian in 1887, was translated into German in 1906, two years after the "discovery" of the primitive. The scholarly interest in the art of the child, which took on a sudden growth at this time in Germany and England, was the direct result of an expansion of the educational system toward the inclusion of the poorer classes, and the consequent changes in curriculum. This was especially true of Germany, which, due to its former backwardness, necessarily made its reforms more rapidly. These changes focused attention on pre-adolescent artistic expression, which was found to be much more a transcription of the child's thoughts about the world than of his visual perception of it. The idea that the child should "express himself" by setting down this "intellectual

realism," true only to its own inner and personal logic, and that his learning of the traditional artistic language should be deferred as long as possible, although it today derives much of its educational strength from artists who have developed their own adult styles in this fashion, was then due only in extremely minor part to a similar feeling on the part of the artists. Its use in the school studio came rather from the application of general educational theory, evolved in other fields, to the province of art; and it indicates that the artist's affinity with childish expression in what Ellen Key predicted would be the "century of the child" was more than a superficial borrowing, that they were linked by a similar concern with the expression of primitive fundamentals of personality.

But this double emphasis on inner expression reacted in a peculiar way on its own appreciation. With external standards destroyed, with no rule by which to tell a child's work from a masterpiece, there were two solutions: One was to proclaim any truly "free" expression art, and in so far as this was uncritically resorted to—children's exhibitions as art rather than as education, early surrealist practice and later surrealist theory, etc.—the primitivist tendency won through. But to those artists and writers disturbed by this resemblance, a critical process by its nature indefinable and intuitional was forced to become more and more esoteric, so that the appreciation of an art supposedly available to every one tended to be restricted to the self-appointed initiate, and to find an ever smaller audience. We have noticed this anti-primitive result of primitivism at several places in our analysis of the pictures themselves: This is a social extension of what seems to be the inevitable defeat of one of the primitivist goals.

The measure of success that may be granted to the primitivist aims of the surrealists has already been discussed. Here we simply wish to note that they considered it possible to make use of investigations and hypotheses which, while anything but primitivist in their correct application, could nevertheless be distorted towards a kind of sensa-

tional primitivism. (Not only does popular psychoanalytic acceptance have this tendency, but the very appearance of the original psychoanalytic problem shows a bias in that direction.) This has to do with more than the mere use of sexual subject-matter: One has only to call to mind the themes used by the eighteenth century in France to realize that the manifestly announced and pictorially suggested savagery of the surrealists is not the necessary concomitant of such subjects. How far the extremity of sophistication that accompanies this shouted desire is in itself documentation of certain psychoanalytic theories we cannot examine here. Freud himself has declined to comment. However, the parallel between the extreme individualism and subjectivity of the axioms on which the structures of both the psychiatrists and the modern artist are built is especially noteworthy, and their similar emphasis on the purely emotional side of man's mind. Given the initial necessity (resulting from problems concerning the isolated individual—contrast the eighteenth century with its highly social art) to produce something from one's inner consciousness alone, a primitivism is perhaps an inevitable result.

This necessity was of course not of the artist's own choosing, and even though he has been forced to make a virtue of it, his too much protesting shows that he did not accept it as natural. The separation of the artist from his public had already begun in the nineteenth century, when patronage lay largely with a new middle class group whose taste tended, because of a lack of assurance in artistic matters, to be of a *retardataire* sort. The contest between artist and official and respectable patronage became so legendary that until recently the twentieth century accepted it as having always existed. But although it had its roots further back, it only arose in an acute form when, apart from a few painters producing ordered portraits, the artists (like others in their society) were forced to produce for a free market, which in this case did not keep up with them. Up to the end of the century, however, they applied their sensibility to what was appar-

ently their first refuge from a hostile society, namely the natural scene, or to those elements of city and suburban life which could be viewed in the same aesthetic light. Just what should have exhausted this field for the twentieth century European artist (with certain derivative exceptions) it is hard to say. But it is significant that the first evidences of modern primitivism, as we have found them to exist in the artists of the *art nouveau* in the 'nineties, should just have been attempts to seize nature at its lowest levels—the use of ornamental forms adapted from the lowest ranges of animal and plant life. Thus this exhaustion was in a way felt by the artists themselves before they abandoned the field entirely, and the simultaneous spread of a primitivist feeling throughout Europe at this period is a remarkable fact.

At the same time that the artist was forced back upon himself by this social situation, the historical consciousness of the nineteenth century brought home to him the existence of a tremendous variety of styles, and the extreme relativity of any one plastic vision. Without a controlling public demand he tended to renounce whatever was close to him, and to find his affinities in remote periods of greatness—an historical, but not yet an aesthetic primitivism. Besides this, even as far back as the impressionists there was a conscious concern with psychological and physiological fundamentals which was something new. But increasingly the artist's immediate (and articulate) public was his fellow artist, so that there was a constant premium upon technical skill, innovation and wit as judged by an over-acute audience. Thus the painter was in a situation which, while emphasizing technical proficiency and its origins, at the same time called sharp attention to its uselessness as a final goal. This combination of influences may explain that peculiar indirect simplification of style—a simplification based upon a knowledge of and an allusion to more obviously intricate and elaborate styles, an ellipsis whose references are recalled by their very omission—characteristic of so much of pictorial primitivism, and also to be found in modern literary primitivism: On the

one hand the artist discounted technical and manual cleverness but was unable to avoid it as a means of making his personality felt. On the other hand, lacking a common social and plastic language, he sought a way of intensifying his own personal emotion, of broadening its objective and its subjective base, in order to give it reason for existence. We have examined the methods—historical and geographical, subjective and objective—by which he tried to achieve that end. We saw that in general they fitted into a trend toward a painting of an absolute character arrived at by an expansion of the primitivist means.

Our original question as to how far modern art is “really primitive” would now be rather superfluous: It must now be clear that, in spite of important borrowings from the aboriginal arts, primitivism as it is embodied in modern painting, has little similarity—though it has a definite and essential relation—with the chronologically, the culturally, or the aesthetically primitive in the arts. But since the effort to achieve the absolute character we have noted, and primitivism itself, are both products of the same situation in modern art, its primitivist features may be considered not merely accidents, but of its essential nature.

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